

A CASE FOR HOLISTIC MINISTRY TO URBAN YOUTH AND FAMILIES

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To my husband, Lawrence Ward and my sons, Paul and Mark Ward

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ABSTRACT

Urban churches are facing a crisis in the development of youth leaders who are trained for holistic ministry to urban youth and families. Existing trainings fail to incorporate the complex nature of the urban family environment. This thesis argues the need for training urban church based youth leaders as facilitators for holistic and systematic ministry to youth and families. The theological foundation explores key components of the urban family, urban systems and the urban church village as the base of an authoritative community to equip and empower urban families.

CHAPTER 1

A CRISIS AND A NEED

Urban churches are facing a crisis in the development of youth leaders who are trained to minister in their communities. This thesis presents a case for the need to train urban youth leaders for holistic ministry to urban youth and their families. There are adult volunteers who are willing to work with youth but are under resourced and ill equipped to minister to youth and families. Many are devoid of understanding the complexity of the systems affecting urban families and are disconnected from those systems. Holistic training is the process of stretching those youth leaders to see a bigger picture of the urban family.

This case for holistic ministry to urban youth and their families will be addressed through five main areas. First, urban youth leaders are ministering to youth with little to no specific training about the systems affecting urban youth and families. The traditional youth ministry models were designed with a suburban, two parent, middle class home in mind and are not applicable to the average urban family.¹ Urban youth workers often are volunteers who do not have the opportunity to be trained professionally to reach the youth that have been entrusted to them. A ten-year evaluation of the DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative (DVULI), a national training initiative specifically for urban-based youth workers, showed the importance of training. When surveyed regarding training for urban youth leaders, virtually every graduate either answered “Strongly Agree” (62.5%) or “Agree” (32%) that “DVULI training has prepared me for leadership in my

¹ Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, *Youth Ministry in City Churches: Proven Tips From Over 40 Youth Ministry Veterans* (Loveland, CO: Thom Schultz Publication, Inc., 1989), 111.

community.”² Upon completion of this training urban youth leaders were better equipped for ministry to urban youth and their families.

Youth ministry is both art and science. The art of youth ministry requires the youth leader to possess a heart and passion to minister to youth. The science of youth ministry entails the training and equipping of the youth leader with the skills necessary to support urban youth and their families. Opportunities to develop the art and science of youth ministry occur through multiple training experiences including mentoring, conferences and academic settings. The science of urban youth ministry involves a shift in thinking from programming individual youth with individual problems to seeing the external and internal problems surrounding urban youth and their families. Training is needed in this area in order for urban youth leaders to understand and equip youth.

DeVos graduates also expressed an expanded, more holistic vision for ministry as a result of training. This expanded vision included both broad statements about changes in their thinking as well as two major sub-themes describing new perspectives on community building and new ways of empowering others in ministry:

The word ‘holistic’ came up numerous times as graduates described how the Initiative had changed their thinking regarding what ministry meant and how ministers functioned. In the past, graduates commented that they usually focused on traditional ministry roles such as prayer, bible study, and church attendance. Prior to DVULI training, they often didn’t consider the entire person and their needs. However, graduates now think more comprehensively and positively about the connections between a person’s spiritual, social, emotional, and physical needs. Such thinking makes all of life a ministry rather than just fulfilling the tasks and responsibilities of a traditional minister.³

...The church thinks their job is...teach[ing] people how to pray, read the bible, and

² VanderWaal, Curtis J., *DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative Evaluation, Achieving The Dream: Volume I and II* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 2007), 14.

³ VanderWaal, Curtis J., *DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative Evaluation, Achieving The Dream: Volume I and II*, 23.

go to church. Now we're living in a time where there's so much moral break down and we have to teach people how to be people, how to be functioning and contributing to society and that's the gospel. It's complete restoration; it's Titus women mentoring younger women, and men mentoring boys. It's people raising, not disciple raising. Albuquerque⁴

So it's really changed my attitude in terms of I need to make sure that I am hitting people where they live in terms of what their needs are instead of me determining, 'this is where you are at, this is what you need'. Make sure that I am doing the right amount of assessment, of follow up.... Indianapolis⁵

The DVULI evaluation shows when urban ministries increase the training of its youth leaders for holistic ministry to youth and their families the youth leaders are more likely to minister in a holistic manner. Where training is present for youth ministry it generally focuses on the programmatic component of youth ministry negating the living systems surrounding urban youth and their families. The youth worker who has never had sociology or youth development training needs to be aware and see this as a part of their professional challenge. Equity in training is needed to increase the capacity of urban youth leaders to minister holistically.

Secondly the number of youth who are attending church and youth ministry sessions is on the decline. Author Christian Smith along with Melinda Lundquist Denton conducted a survey of high school teenagers regarding their religious and spiritual lives.⁶ The results revealed three specific religious groups of teens in America consisting of the spiritual but not religious, the disengaged and the highly devoted. A general theme surfaced among those surveyed about their faith that the authors labeled 'moralistic

⁴ VanderWaal, Curtis J., *DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative Evaluation, Achieving The Dream: Volume and II*, 23.

⁵ VanderWaal, Curtis J., *DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative Evaluation, Achieving The Dream: Volume I and II*, 23.

⁶ Christian Smith, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 69, 71.

therapeutic deism', a summarizing creed that individualizes and moralizes faith in its approach to life. This creed represented a wide range of youth from varied religious backgrounds ranging from Protestant, Catholic, Mormon, Jewish, Christian Science and Muslim faiths. The average weekly attendance of the students surveyed showed 40% of teens attending religious services once a week or more, with 19% attending one to three times per month.⁷

The sequel to this survey, *Souls in Transition* continued with the students previously interviewed as they grew into emerging young adults ages 18-24.⁸ The attitudes from this five-year study were captured in four religious groups the devoted, the regular, the sporadic and the disengaged. These emerging adults are not as religious as older adults and share some of the same opinions as the previous generations. Through a model of the distinct levels of operative American Religion the authors showed the progression and influence of faith in the lives of American youth.⁹ Faith appears in the lives of youth as a way to feel good and do good as the individual sees fit.

Despite the multiple efforts of churches youth who at one time did participate are either no longer attending youth ministries or leaving the church after high school in their early twenties. A study conducted by the Barna Research Group suggests that only one in four teens participate in church youth groups.¹⁰ Youth leaders are constantly reinventing themselves and their youth ministries in order to keep youth coming back each week. Youth conferences, concerts and other big event type of programs catch the attention of

⁷ Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls In Transition: The Religious & Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 37.

⁸ Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls In Transition: The Religious & Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*, 259.

⁹ Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls In Transition: The Religious & Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*, 169.

¹⁰ Toni Ridgaway, "Barna: Youth Too Busy for Groups," *USA Today* (August 12, 2010): accessed March 2, 2016, <http://www.churchleaders.com/youth/youth-culture-trends/143990>.

youth but it is short lived. Families who attend the church tend to be more supportive of the youth activities and in some cases parents require youth to attend. Often when these children age out they no longer attend youth ministry or church. Urban youth ministries find it difficult to compete with its suburban counterparts due to the lack of resources and are forced to rely on creative ways to draw youth weekly. Efrem Smith points out the challenge of urban youth ministries due to a lack of resources, attention, training and empowerment.¹¹

Thirdly, urban families are not self-sufficient and need additional supports. In years past families were defined as a two-parent home where a father and a mother resided and jointly participated in the development of their children. The family has been redefined through the years with single moms taking the lead in the urban environment. For African-American families two thirds of newborn babies enter the world to an unwed mother and no consistent father figure.¹² Many moms are working two jobs to provide the finances for the home often leaving the children with afterschool programs or community centers. Fathers are not as involved in the lives of their children and those who are co-parenting often have scheduled visits with their children on a regular basis.¹³ Older children may be working or left to make decisions about their time without adult guidance. These changes in the urban family structure have created a need for support in multiple ways outside of its nuclear unit.

Additional problems of the urban family according to sociologists include

¹¹ Efrem Smith, "It's Not Easy Being Green, Especially When There Is No Green," *Youth Specialties Blog*, October 10, 2009, accessed January 10, 2013, <http://www.youthspecialties.com/blog>.

¹² George Barna and Harry R. Jackson, Jr. *High Impact African-American Churches*. (Ventura, CA: Regal Books from Gospel Light, 2004), 129.

¹³ Co-parenting is a term used to explain biological parents choosing to participate in the raising of their child from different physical homes.

spiritual challenges, the increasing rate of singles versus married homes, and broken family relationships.¹⁴ Each of these issues compounds the foundational economic challenges that urban families face and threaten the legacy of the family. If the family is the cornerstone of society then urban families are the heartbeat of the city. When the weaknesses of the urban family are not addressed or supported the children reflect the instability caused by poorly built structures. A weak family structure eats at the urban family contributing to the deterioration of the children. Youth leaders who are aware of these issues can serve as connectors to the supports urban families need.

Fourthly, the urban church although positioned to properly engage youth and their families lacks an effective plan and resources. Geographically churches present in urban environments often outnumber other social service agencies, businesses and educational facilities. Although numerically present the effect of the urban church is not felt on the urban family like in times past. Churches have been operating in silos and no longer considered to be effective in the community. The local urban church rallied the entire family through holistic development that reached the academic, physical, financial, legal and even civic needs of each person. Immigrant families found support and guidance for whatever life handed them through the local church. The black church, in particular served as the meeting place and known support of the family supplying counseling, groceries and even social engagement for the entire family.

As families have reduced their weekly church attendance the connections to local houses of worship have weaned. Families are no longer as dependent on the local church to support their development with some limiting their interaction with church to a

¹⁴ African American sociologists such as Andrew Billingsley and Harriette Pipes McAdoo address issues of the urban family.

wedding or funeral. Self-entertaining social mediums like video games that can be played with people from across the globe and multiple social media streams are competing to meet the social needs of youth. The need for spiritual interaction from a local church is no longer considered as important by parents.

Over the years as governmental and social service agencies increased families reached out for other supports. At the same time the church reformatted its programs towards the individualistic development of each family member. The disconnection from the whole person led to a fragmented development of youth and families. The church's intentionality of personal and corporate equipping through integrated ministries brought a loss of family development momentum. The urban church shifted from having a plan and resources to lacking an effective plan with adequate resources.

The urban church is fighting the dysfunctions of their macro systems on several fronts including their educational systems, medical especially physical and mental health systems, and the legal systems. Limited resources in the public educational systems in the urban environment contribute to poorly educated youth. This leads to high unemployment due to the change from agricultural jobs to basic technical jobs to current green and specific high tech skill-based jobs in biotechnology and computerization. When youth and families are unable to financially support themselves the door is open for sub-systems to develop underground.

There are parts of the city that are well resourced and other parts that lack the capacity to service its constituents with proper resources. These inequities in the distribution of local and town aid in urban communities highlight the blight and despair in its residents. There are families and churches located in these disadvantaged urban

sectors. The kind of holistic ministry we need points to the church collaborating with other agencies to make up for the lack of resources and then lead the change of the social systems to adequately support urban families. The urban church can address the systemic failure of society holistically. These issues should be addressed and overcome from a community standpoint.

Lastly, urban communities are facing major social issues that are affecting youth. In the book *Our America* life in one of the roughest parts of the United States is described as the “second America”.¹⁵ In this part of town the laws of the street overrule the laws of the land. *The Code of the Streets* as written by Elijah Anderson becomes the ethical thermostat youth from economically challenged communities abide by daily. Properly understanding this code can be a life or death situation for urban youth and their families.

Systemic issues of race and gender continue to plague urban communities and are displayed through movements like Black Lives Matter (BLM). During the year 2015 black youth, particularly males were physically targeted and killed in basic confrontations with mostly white law enforcement officers. Cities in America became known for racial outbursts such as Ferguson, Missouri, Baltimore, Maryland and Charleston, North Carolina where a racist man gunned down black parishioners in their building after a bible study. Urban communities became the center stage for many of these protests.

Black men have faced deep-seated systemic injustice over the years in America. For example the penal system in the United States incarcerates the highest percentage of black males compared to other ethnic groups. Michelle Alexander in *The New Jim Crow* notes the difficulty in proving that racial disparities exist in the criminal justice system as

¹⁵ LeAlan Jones and Lloyd Newman, *Our America: Life and Death on the South Side of Chicago* (New York, NY: Pocket Books, 1997), 199.

a product of intentional racial discrimination.¹⁶ The absence of black men as potential fathers in inner cities plays a major role in the deficient development of the black urban family. Without proper male role models, urban families are lacking the basic family structure designed to support youth.

Justice was sought by communities of families with youth of all ages leading the charge to bring about change in their community. Students of all ethnic backgrounds on college campuses joined their voices with the BLM movement demanding justice for years of institutionalized racism against black students. The weaknesses and biases of the criminal justice system have been exposed and its roots are attributed to racism. The rights and needs of urban families are in question, as the community is demanding systemic changes.

All of these areas point to a need for holistic ministry of the urban church-based youth leader. Throughout this document I am using the term "youth leader" to define someone who is leading an urban church-based youth ministry as a volunteer or paid staff. The term "youth worker" is a volunteer who assists a youth leader on a team but may not have defined responsibilities in the ministry. Youth leaders and youth workers are people who are designated by their church board and/or pastor to provide spiritual direction and programming for the youth in their congregations and community. The age range of youth varies by congregation. Most urban youth ministries consist of high school, middle school and elementary school aged children. Often the youth ministry in an urban setting includes young adults aged 18-30 serving as the youth workers.

¹⁶ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2010), 103.

Holistic Urban Youth Ministry

Holistic education is a term derived during the 1970's to describe an inclusive concept of the cultivation of the moral, emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions of the developing child.¹⁷ This concept of understanding education called holism, allows for multiple layers of meaning. A person who understands holistic education sees and permits multiple learning avenues, knowing that youth learn from a variety of sources. The roots of Montessori education are found in holistic thinking. Youth are guided through their education with the consideration of their whole person.

The concept of holistic youth ministry is foreign in the traditional suburban context but no stranger to the urban environment. Youth leaders in the suburban context have approached youth ministry primarily focused on an individual student's spiritual needs and sought to create individual change. The family was engaged on a minimal level and the systems surrounding youth were not addressed. Movements like family-based youth ministry by Mark DeVries presents a shift in the thinking of suburban youth leaders towards a more holistic approach to youth ministry. Urban youth ministry is often forced to address the multiple layers of a young person and their family with the mindset of a social worker. Youth leaders in urban settings need to take a communal approach to youth and seek change in the communities surrounding them and their families and the space in between all of those systems.¹⁸

The definition of holistic urban youth ministry is the taking into account and

¹⁷ R. Miller, "A Brief Introduction to Holistic Education," *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education* (2000), accessed May 9, 2014, <http://infed.org/mobi/a-brief-introduction-to-holistic-education/>.

¹⁸ Sean Erreger, "Intro to Social Work: Understanding the Macro, Mezzo and Micro Levels of Analysis," *Social Worker Helper* (October 2014), accessed March 17, 2016, <https://www.socialworkhelper.com/2014/10/28/intro-social-work-understanding-macro-mezzo-micro-levels-analysis-systems-theory/>.

examining the macro and micro systems surrounding youth and their families and communities, including the intrapersonal and interpersonal internal systems within the individual youth along with the mezzo systems in between all of the above. These systems consist of and are not limited to their physical, emotional, educational, economical and family issues. The urban youth worker operates in tandem with these systems at all times. Failure to do so results in a half-baked ministry approach. The problem is that most urban youth leaders are not trained or experienced in holistic youth ministry yet are by default called to function in this level of work.

Urban youth leaders facilitate the discipleship and empowerment of families to connect their faith with their lives as they navigate through complex systems affecting urban youth. Holistic urban youth ministry should include ministry to youth and families beginning with children's ministry continuing to junior and high school through college and young adult years. This pipeline of development would require all supporting agencies and ministries to collaborate. As church-based youth ministries transfer students to campus-based ministries who reciprocate the transfer upon graduation, urban youth and families can be fully supported at each stage of life.

Urban Youth Ministry Defined

The definition of urban has evolved over time. The first definition of urban described the movement of society from an agricultural society to an urban technological society. This move was experienced globally. People moved from the agricultural side of the rural areas of our communities to the city. The sudden losses of resources from the

forest and soil along with drought pushed people towards the city. The city had the medical facilities, jobs, and schools for their children. This was called the urbanization of global society.

The second definition of urban refers to a particular metropolitan area such as greater Los Angeles, California and greater Boston, Massachusetts, describing a city with its suburbs. Another example of a metropolitan area is Paris, France where the rich people live in the city and the poor people live in the suburbs. Sociologists who define urban in this context note a freedom from ethnocentrism providing a broader cross-cultural and historical foundation of urban ¹⁹.

The third definition of urban is what most people use. This describes the inner city that does not have the same infrastructure or the same municipal services as other parts of the city. Here education is diminished. Economics is the driver for most of the issues the community faces in this area. There are greater stressors on families in the inner city. Through out this thesis I am defining urban as the third section of the city, the inner city. The youth and families who reside in the inner city require a holistic approach in ministry.

Boston, the city I have resided in my whole life has a culture, a set of behavioral patterns, past and present that defines this city.²⁰ Every urban area has a culture that is linked to each neighborhood where there are more ethnically diverse cultures. Within these neighborhoods there are sub oppositional cultures such as drugs, gangs, etc. that seek to destroy the culture of that city. Urban youth leaders need to understand and relate

¹⁹ Sociologists such as Max Weber, Robert Redfield and Gideon Sjoberg suggest this definition of urban. Richard G. Fox, "Urban Culture," *Encyclopedia Britannica. Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 2015. Web June 3, 2015. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/619432/urban-culture>.

²⁰ Fox, "Urban Culture," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1.

to the culture of their city to effectively serve its youth and families in a holistic manner.

A Case for Holistic Urban Youth Ministry

Through focus groups comprised of urban youth leaders and parents I intend to conduct a field test of the knowledge and practice of holistic youth ministry. Various scenarios requiring holistic ministry to youth and their families in urban churches will be presented. This case should surface the greater need to train urban church-based youth leaders to serve as a facilitator of resources to urban youth and their families. This will require a major shift in the thinking of the role of an urban youth leader to include a working knowledge of holistic urban youth ministry. A clear picture of the systems affecting urban youth, their surrounding communities, the urban church and all of its family systems will be explored in the test.

My assumptions are that the need for holistic urban youth ministry is low on the radar screen for most urban youth leaders and workers. If an awareness of the need is present there may not be an intentional plan and/or structure in place to adequately address the issues at hand. If the practice of holistic urban youth ministry is present it may be a byproduct of an ethnic culture, as in the African American setting. These assumptions will be addressed in the project chapter as well as my concluding recommendations.

As a local and national trainer of urban youth leaders and workers I have encountered many stories of families requiring additional supports that are beyond the capacity of the youth leader. Often the youth and family need could have been met if the youth leader were trained to minister holistically. My project will bring to light typical

challenges facing urban families to test the ability of urban youth workers to assess and connect on a communal level versus individualistic level. I expect to see youth leaders possessing the foundational youth ministry tools but lacking the in-depth training to be effective facilitators of urban family development.

The information gathered from the focus groups can later be compiled into areas for training and developing urban youth leaders. Key points of empowerment can be identified for specific training materials for urban youth leaders in the holistic development of urban youth and their families. These training materials can be in written form as well as online training formats such as podcasts. Ethnic specific materials can be produced from this case as a framework to support families from all cultures.

CHAPTER 2

THE FAMILY: LOVING GOD THROUGH SHEMA

The Shema: Holistic Spiritual Development For Urban Families

The profession of youth ministry has been discovering the power of the Shema. It is here where we begin to see the spiritual development of families outlined to the children of Israel in Deuteronomy chapter six, verses 4-9, known in Jewish culture as the Shema (figure 1, pronounced Sh'mah):

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. King James Version

No other passage in the Bible defines the family's role as clearly as Deuteronomy 6.¹ It is here that God places the responsibility of the spiritual development of the children squarely on the shoulders of the parents. Brian Haynes in his book *Shift* plainly states it this way; "God's plan for spiritual formation places the family in the lead when it comes to equipping the next generation. Parents are to impress the commands of God on their children in everyday life."² The Shema is the declaration of faith in God being paramount in the lives of families. The commandments of the God are to be known by the parents and impressed on the lives of the children daily in every way. God requires parents to

¹ Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange: Imagine the Impact When Church and Family Collide...* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009), 74.

² Brian Haynes, *Shift: What it Takes to Finally Reach Families Today*. (Loveland, CO: Group, 2009), 36.

leave a spiritual legacy for their children through simple activities such as when they are sitting for meals or at work doing family chores.

Figure 1. The Shema written in Hebrew, Deuteronomy 6:4. *Source:* www.Chabad.org.

שמע ישראל יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד

Hear, O Israel *Shema Yisra'el*

The Lord is our God *Adonai Eloheinu*

The Lord is one! *Adonai ehad!*

The Shema means hear or listen and includes two key elements 1) exclusive fidelity to God and 2) God's unity through experienced moments. Families are instructed to teach their children that nothing is before God, nothing should replace God, and no systems of value are greater than God. The experienced moments in God encompass love, beauty, good and holiness. These moments are not an end of themselves but are disparate and scattered signals of the presence of God.³ Many youth and their families have replaced these moments with sports, activities, and other good things. The Shema calls families back to the order of God first, family second and everything else rounds third. Families are challenged to create a rhythm so their time together will nurture an

³ Alan Mintz, "The Shema," *My Jewish Learning*, accessed August 7, 2013, www.MyJewishLearning.com/texts/Liturgy_and_Prayers/Siddur_Prayer_Book/Shema.

everyday faith.⁴ Through moments of joy and pain families are able to share in what God provides as a connected people. This is desperately needed for families in the urban environment.

God desired for youth to grow up hearing about who He is from the home first. The foundation of faith was through the parents and was to be reinforced outside of the home. We live in a fallen world and now the family structure has been redefined, altered and in some cases destroyed. Television shows like *Modern Family* are reshaping the definitions of family thereby creating new mental models that may not align with scripture and traditional family values.⁵ It is the church that must help redeem the family in our urban communities. Urban youth workers can introduce families to the Shema as they build relationships with youth and their families.

In the New Testament when Jesus is questioned regarding the greatest commandment of the law in Matthew 22:34-39, Mark 12:28-31 and how to inherit eternal life in Luke 10:25-27, he gives the Shema as an answer to both questions. His childhood parents and culture taught him that God is first in all things and should be loved with all your heart, soul and strength. Jesus adds the mind to the list of Old Testament teachings from the family denoting the importance of the biblical way of thinking. Paul reminds us to “let this mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus”, Phil 2:5 and in Romans 12:1,2 he challenges us to renew our minds. This holistic view of God is taught and practiced through the vehicle of the family. Everything that surrounds, supports and touches the family is accounted for, internally and externally. This foundational principle should be taught in the homes of urban families.

⁴ Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange*, 74.

⁵ *Modern Family* is a television comedy, a “mockumentary” that explores different types of culturally defying family units.

The Theology of Family

God, through the scriptures, outlined a clear path for families to walk upon that leads to spiritually mature children. As parents follow the scriptures, God holds them accountable for the progress each person in the family makes.⁶ The families of the Old Testament generally consisted of strong lineages, with close-knit units where each member's role was clearly defined. Fathers were to provide loving leadership of the home. Mothers were responsible for nurturing the home and children were to obey their parents' direction. The parental charge included instructing children in the ways of God, providing for their needs, protecting them, training them and guiding them towards their purpose in life. The family structure itself was the vehicle through which God communicated to man.⁷ God's intention for the family is the creation of a covenant community.

The family carries the biblical mandate to train and equip children. Psalms 78 speaks about the family owning the responsibility to teach the next generation about the ways of God. Each generation was required to remember how the Lord revealed the divine oracles to Israel as an expression of the covenantal relationship that he had sovereignly and graciously established between himself and Israel.⁸ The passing on of the teachings of God would enable the seed to put their trust in God by remembering his deeds and keeping his commandments. The method of transferring information from one

⁶ George Barna and Harry R. Jackson, Jr. *High Impact African-American Churches*. (Ventura, CA: Regal Books from Gospel Light, 2004), 136.

⁷ Dick Iverson et al., *Restoring The Family: Principles of Family Life* (Portland, OR: Bible Temple Publications, 1979), 2.

⁸ Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 593.

generation to another was done orally in a family setting. The word of God was rehearsed for multiple generations to hear simultaneously.

Posterity and their spiritual development was a concern that God reminded the children of Israel consistently.

Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God. (Psalm 78, King James Version)

Moses spoke to the children of Israel regarding instructing their children at home, (Deut 6:6-9, 20-22; Ex 10:2, 12:26-27; 13:8) as a way of life. George Barna notes a similar trend among black families [that] like the tribes of Israel, and the early Christians who verbally preserved their faith to the next generation the black experience is largely an oral rather than a written tradition. Many of the customs have spiritual origins that have been passed along through family conversations, mentoring and church-based teaching.⁹

Throughout the book of Proverbs there are various parental and youth charges given for the empowering of the family.¹⁰ Other supporting scriptures for ministry to youth and their families include:

⁹ George Barna, *High Impact African-American Churches*, 30.

¹⁰ Proverbs 4:1-9; 10:1; 13:1, 19:18; 20:11

“My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.” (Proverbs 1:8, 9)

“My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.” (Proverbs 6:20-23)

My husband and I have used these scriptures in the raising of our children and I have applied them to the youth ministry in our local church setting, teaching them to parents and youth alike. The families in our church community were not familiar with this teaching and needed to be trained how to instruct their children. Occasionally the children created necklaces with biblical instructions they later wore at home. This action proved to address some concerns with church-going parents regarding their spiritual commitment to God because they could not reinforce something they were not practicing. Parents who were not Christians would inquire about the meaning of the instruction, giving the church the opportunity to introduce Christ and a biblical way of living to that household.

The home or family is the basic unit of all society, the cornerstone on which everything is built.¹¹ Our sense of social wellbeing is rooted in the family. History has shown that when the family is affected society reaps the aftermath. Examples from the Roman Empire, the Western slavery institution and the industrialization of America have proven the importance of the family condition in correlation to society. The Romans developed a body of law from which important elements of family law in the United States and Europe are descended.¹² Socioeconomic changes of the Roman Empire had an

¹¹ Dick Iverson, *Restoring the Family*, 1.

¹² Richard Saller, “Family Values in Ancient Rome,” The University of Chicago Library Digital Collections, 2, accessed March 31, 2015, <http://fathom.lib.uchicago.edu/1/777777121908>.

important impact on their families. Ancient Romans had shorter life expectancy thus leaving children without a father who displayed authority in their teen years. The effect of slavery on the black American family still continues. Slavery disconnected people from their tribes, traditions and culture. Children were left without covering, traumatized, thereby increasing their risk physically and emotionally.¹³

Industrialization changed the family authoritative structure. Fathers were wounded or killed in the war, sending women out to work outside of the home. Children quickly became independent, making their own decisions about their growth and development. Family instruction was diminished and the ways of God were no longer being taught as in bible times. The change in the family structure birthed church-based youth ministry as a means to support families in the spiritual development of youth.

A Portrait of Biblical Families

The biblical ‘first family’ gives us a snapshot of the complexity of the urban family:

- A husband, although present, is not walking in his full authority
- A mother, deceived by Satan, disobeys God’s commandment
- An angry, envious son kills his brother
- An obedient son innocently loses his life

As a result of these complex issues the family is displaced from their original home environment, the Garden of Eden, in trauma over the loss of a son and faces economic hardship due to Adam’s new job situation. Many of the issues facing urban families are displayed in this account: opposing agendas, lack of male leadership, disobedient females, sibling rivalry and economic hardship, to name a few. Although the

¹³ George Barna, *High Impact African-American Churches*, 128.

first biblical family had a father present in the home, 70% of urban families do not have a male parent living in the home.¹⁴ For the 30% that do, most of the parents are struggling to find their spiritual identity and do not feel adequate to help their children. In Walt Mueller's book, *The Space Between*, the Shema is one of the strategies he suggests parents keep in mind. Mueller reminds parents "when God's truths become the central overriding interest and purpose in our lives, teaching them to our children will happen almost subconsciously."¹⁵ Kara Powell's book on *Sticky Faith* makes parents ask real questions about their faith and serves as a great starting point of family faith development.

The promise of the Abrahamic covenant is that all families of the earth would be blessed through Abraham's family. God sets the tone for family blessing from the onset with this statement. The family unit God intended was with Abraham and Sarah. The deadly combination of unbelief and impatience brought about an additional family through Sarah's maid, Hagar, from which Ishmael was born. This blended family worked temporarily but it did not satisfy the original commandment of God to Abraham that all families of the earth would be blessed through his loins. God still blesses this blended family with another promise to Hagar in a moment of despair (Gen 21:17,18).

Eli the priest (I Sam. 1-4) displays a father who did well at work but failed at home. His two natural sons, Hophni and Phinias, showed no regard for the statues of God. They disobeyed and invited others to do the same. Eli cautioned his sons but could not bring himself to action. First Timothy tells of the true test of a pastor's ability to

¹⁴ George R. Williams, "Quenching The Father Thirst," National Center for Fathering, April 9, 2007, accessed January 28, 2014, <http://www.fathers.com/s5-your-situation/urban-fathering/quenching-the-father-thirst-2/>.

¹⁵ Walt Mueller, *The Space Between: A Parent's Guide to Teenage Development* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan/Youth Specialties, 2009), 104.

shepherd a flock is one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity. Eli was also in charge of a spiritual son, Samuel. There was a redemptive element to the rearing of Samuel in the temple. Although Eli could not save his own sons he was able to steer his spiritual son in the right direction. This example of failing at home and success outside of the home is portrayed in church families today. Church kids with parents actively engaged in serving and ministry on a weekly basis can lack the spiritual development in their own households. Some parents avoid or abdicate to the church the responsibility of being the spiritual leaders.¹⁶ Others simply do not know how and need training in order to raise spiritually sound children.

The New Testament is sprinkled with family language, both to the literal, biological family, and the family as a metaphor for the faith community. Paul sees the Ephesian churches as a family. He frequently uses the words adoption and sonship while explaining the roles of family within church. Ephesians 6 lists specific roles with family dynamics and how the family relates to one another. Paul speaks of mothers, elders and deacons in leadership of the church and that they must be able to run their families first. Titus speaks to the roles of women, and uses family language of sonship, heirs, joint-heirs, and receiving the inheritance only by bloodline. In Ephesians 3:15 Paul refers to the whole family in heaven and earth as he bows his knee to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The principle of the family being the vehicle God desires to shape and form children, naturally and spiritually is embodied throughout the Old and New Testaments. An understanding of the family in various contexts, whether through the Passover family meal or recorded genealogies displays God's covenant with the family unit.

¹⁶ Reggie Joiner, *Orange Essentials: Five Priorities For Building Faith In The Next Generation* (Cumming, GA: ReThink Group, Inc.), 11.

Urban Application of Shema Today

Today, the urban family is not as well defined as in bible times. The biblical mandates requiring parents to train their children in the ways of God and equip them for life assumed that each home unit was comprised of a father and mother. These mandates were taught from the previous generation and passed on to the current generation in order for them to instruct future generations. Fathers and mothers were given specific roles to accomplish this goal. The current urban family descriptive does not fit this pattern. With the exodus of men and women from the home to the world of work and the increase of fatherlessness biblical parenting is in question. The abandonment of children to the influence of television and the streets coupled with the epidemic of violence that touches the lives of youth, today families require additional support.¹⁷ Parents have become a major part of the problem of the dysfunctional social systems according to Borgman.¹⁸

The responsibility for the biblical mandate is unable to be shared with the dual parental unit thus relegating the training to the mother. In a study conducted by the Barna Institute, 71% of black adults admit that the mother actually runs the home, having the greatest influence on the dreams, priorities and goals of children by default.¹⁹ In some cases, both mother and father are removed from the children and a grandparent, older sibling, or secondary family member becomes the guardian in charge of raising the

¹⁷ R. Miller, "A Brief Introduction to Holistic Education," *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education* (2000), accessed May 9, 2014. <http://infed.org/mobia/a-brief-introduction-to-holistic-education/>.

¹⁸ Dean Borgman, *Foundations for Youth Ministry: Theological Engagement with Teen Life and Culture*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 115.

¹⁹ George Barna, *High Impact African American Churches*, 130.

children. According to Borgman churches and communities are called upon to support the threatened family social system.²⁰

In cases where the mother is the head of household the church must support single mothers to become the spiritual leader and champion in the home.²¹ We have witnessed many single mothers raise Christian children who are successful academically, socially and financially because a faith community surrounded the family for their holistic development. Using the church as a community, single mothers, Christian and non-Christian, were connected with strong Christian families. Men were added to support the children of single mothers. Godly principles were instilled in the parents and children. The urban faith community walked out the Shema daily as a community of families.

Urban fathers are not totally out of the picture. There are some hard-working fathers who have stayed in the home despite the odds and followed the principles of the Shema daily. However there are special challenges and barriers facing urban fathers such as the high rate of fatherlessness and lack of male role models.²² Other challenges include lower educational status and lack of employment. Dr. Willie Richardson, author of *Reclaiming the Urban Family* declares that the church cannot build strong families without reaching out to fathers and sons.²³ The church can help men address the issues plaguing their parenting successfully in an urban environment. By being intentional about including men in the spiritual development of youth, urban churches have reached out to families without fathers present in the home. Men served as uncles, big brothers and

²⁰ Dean Borgman, *Foundations for Youth Ministry*, 116.

²¹ George Barna, *High Impact African American Churches*, 136.

²² George Williams, *Quenching The Father Thirst*, 1.

²³ Dr. Bernard Franklin, "A Challenge to Urban Churches," National Center for Fathering, April 9, 2007, accessed January 28, 2014, <http://www.fathers.com/s5-your-situation/urban-fathering/a-challenge-to-urban-churches-2/>.

fathers. Families knew they could find support from the senior pastor as well as the men in the congregation. The men's ministry owned every youth in the church community in word and deed.

Where there are parents or guardians in place, a clear understanding of these biblical mandates may not be known because they have not been passed down from previous generations. Generally there was a thirty-year span between the generations making it possible for wisdom to germinate and simmer over time. There is a need for the church to provide instruction to parents, guardians and youth alike regarding God's thoughts for the family and the development of its members. As families widen the circle and make sure kids have additional influences to guide them, the church becomes a part of that circle.²⁴ The urban church and youth leaders expanded their thinking to see families as core component of ministry. Program planning took a back seat to family development. This is a different way of thinking about urban youth ministry to bring the Shema of the Old Testament into families today.

Urban family renewal can occur through following the principles of the Shema.

Dr. Bernard Franklin notes a particular action for the African American community:

To be successful, the African American family renewal must include the church. All previous movements to support the African American community have included God and the church. The slave revolts, the underground slave railroad, the abolitionist movement, and the civil rights movement all involved the church in their struggles.²⁵

Urban families can take a clue from African American families. Two combined forces make a greater impact than just two influences.²⁶ When the family and the church

²⁴ Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange*, 74.

²⁵ Bernard Franklin, *A Challenge to Urban Churches*, 1-2.

²⁶ Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange*, 15.

combine, youth will have other trusted adults to help build their faith. The urban family can renew its commitment to being responsible for raising a generation of faithful youth who love God and keep His commandments. *In Restoring the Family*, Dick Iverson reminds parents of the charge regarding specific duties before God for raising their children including:²⁷

- Provision – More than just food, shelter and clothing, parents are responsible for the holistic development of their children: spiritual, emotional, social, intellectual, vocational and moral areas. I Tim 5:8, Matt 18:6, II Cor 12:14.
- Protection – Parents are to guard their children from all the forces that would destroy the wholeness that God intended for their lives. Eph 6:4, I Thess 5:23
- Training – Parents are to spend time training the children that God has given to them centered in godly principles. Additional ways include setting the example or modeling, direct teaching and loving rear disciplined children. Psalm 101:2-4, Deut 4:9-10, Prov 13:24
- Guidance – Parents are to aid the decision-making process with their children by contributing their wisdom and life experience. Gen 18:19, Prov 7:1, 8:10

Much of what urban youth are facing today stems from how they think about their family and faith. Instruction from a biblical world-view would create a cadre of thinking urban youth who can address the ills of their families in a holistic manner.

The Church As Family

Religious institutions function like families, often deriving their very structure from families.²⁸ The founder of family systems theory Murray Bowen created a new order of thinking that shifted family observation from individualistic to group. Instead of seeing youth as a single object he states that people must be viewed in terms of the bigger

²⁷ Dick Iverson, *Restoring the Family*, 58.

²⁸ Dick Iverson, *Restoring The Family*, 195.

picture inclusive of one's family in all its generations.²⁹ Youth leaders have a responsibility to the families they serve, as well as their own, to understand and teach each member of the family their biblical role and support the spiritual development of each member. Every member of the family needs to understand the supremacy of the family as a place of spiritual development and encouragement along with the responsibilities that accompany that role.³⁰

Roberta Gilbert takes Bowen's work further to outline eight concepts of the family systems theory model. Seven of the eight concepts describe the characteristics of the family leaving one to describe the individual family member. Understanding the family systems and family process will equip the youth leader to become more effective in the area of spiritual family development. Rabbi Edwin Friedman continues the family systems theory model building on the foundation principles that what works for families also works for the congregation as families. This is where practical theology unites biblical principles with social science. Friedman identifies five basic concepts of family systems theory that should shape the thinking of youth leaders as they minister holistically. Christian scholars like Jack and Judith Balswick, Murray Bowen and Rabbi Edwin Friedman offer keen insights into family development that urban youth leaders need to understand and practice.

The New Testament framework includes scriptures that address the church's responsibility to equip the body for the work of the ministry as found in I Corinthians 12:27-28 and Ephesians 4:8, 11-16. Christ gave gifts to equip the body and these gifts are

²⁹ Roberta Gilbert, *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory: A New Way of Thinking About the Individual and the Group* (Frederick, VA: Leading Systems Press, 2006), 73.

³⁰ George Barna, *High Impact African American Churches*, 136.

found in the local church. There are also individual mandates given to children in Ephesians 6:1-4 as well as a father's charge. Paul reminds Timothy to remember his childhood teachings in 2 Timothy 3:14-15 and in Hebrews 12:5-11 Paul reminds the church of the importance of discipline and instruction from the heavenly Father and from an earthy father. All of these scriptures can be used to codify the teachings of the Bible for families.

Edwin Friedman in *Generation to Generation* provides a global positioning system, or GPS, for clergy ministering to all kinds of complex families. Because the world has become more anxious, clergy are confronted with people who are more emotionally charged. To survive in this anxious environment clergy must think and act differently. He contends that:

It is essential for clergy to be aware of their simultaneous involvement in three distinct families whose emotional forces interlock; the families within the congregation, our congregations, and our own. Because the emotional process in all of these systems is identical, unresolved issues in any one of them can produce symptoms in the others, and increased understanding of any one creates more effective functioning in all three.³¹

The emotional process of Friedman is based on the theory of Bowen that examined the emotional process of several families and their dysfunction. He saw how the emotional process took over the families, driving the decisions and actions of its members.

Friedman observed the same process unfold in the churches he served. The most dysfunctional members often drove the clergy and congregations. This revelation led Friedman to educate clergy about being flexible in their leadership by focusing on the strengths and not the weaknesses of the congregation. As clergy became a "self-

³¹ Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York: Guilford Press, 1985), 1.

differentiating leader” they put emphasis on their personal leadership versus directing others to make change. This change in mindset creates emotionally healthy clergy who are able to facilitate congregants as they navigate through varied emotional force fields.

The church is a combination of multiple families with several strengths. The family structure assists the facilitation of family discipleship, however it is not the nature of the church.³² As a body of believers the church consists of people who have received Christ. The church can provide the supportive community to families necessary for their holistic development. The village concept of raising children in a communal environment is not foreign in the black church culture. Families often practice varied degrees of the village. According to Friedman, it was not difficult to carry this family structure to the local church assembly where it was ‘understood’ by the majority of the congregation.

In a report to the nation from the Commission on Children at Risk conducted by the YMCA of USA, the Dartmouth Medical School and the Institute for American Values, a new village, duly named authoritative communities, contain this family structure. Authoritative communities are groups of people that live out connectedness that our children increasingly lack.³³ These groups are inter-generational and multi-ethnic in nature. This report recommends youth serving agencies to recognize and promote the spiritual and moral needs of youth. Exploring new methods of assisting the spiritual development of youth may be the single most important challenge facing youth leaders in secular and Christian organizations. Urban church based youth leaders have an opportunity to take the lead in this area.

³² Paul Renfro, Brandon Shields and Jay Strother, *Perspectives on Family Ministry: 3 Views*. (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 89.

³³ The Commission on Children at Risk, *Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities*. (New York: Institute for American Values, 2003), 33.

The changes in society have brought a new mandate to the church and extended its role. Christian education of the family through the vehicle of the church is significant. As the church develops the family, the church that is made up of families is ultimately developed. Edward Wimberly, author of *African American Pastoral Care* outlines the collapse of the African American village for families in general. With the reduction of cross-generational ties, many families lack the successful navigation of life cycle tasks and transitions. The traditional African American communal values such as strong family oriented ties, reverence for elders, caring for children, a deep sense of spirituality, and a conviction that life is sacred have eroded...and a loss of sense of meaning and purpose prevail.³⁴

The church and synagogues in the urban landscape are poised to reach families of all ethnicities. Urban clergy and youth leaders have access to youth often during crisis modes such as funerals and other trauma related circumstances. Properly trained youth leaders can positively affect generations of families. The Shema is about teaching God's family structure that began in Genesis with the Abrahamic covenant and continues to build throughout the scriptures. In Revelation 7:9 the nations of families are joined together, every tribe, nation and tongue. The Shema unifies families in the urban environment around biblical community principles, across ethnic and generational differences.

Families were designed by God to be the place where individuals become communal and accountable in thought and actions. The family unit provides the framework for the life patterns of each individual member. This framework shapes

³⁴ Edward P. Wimberly, *African American Pastoral Care, Revised Edition*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1991), 49.

thinking patterns, guides decision-making and issues a variety of tools that nurture and develop family members from childhood to adulthood. According to Dean Borgman a functional family is a system committed and contributing to the healing, growth and long-term goals of all its members.³⁵

The family covenant is one of the strongest bonds a child learns from the home. Each home unit consists of multiple developmental areas that are nurtured by the individuals who reside there. These areas include, but are not limited to the emotional, sexual, physical, spiritual and intellectual. Family relationships are intended by God to be unconditional and forever; families have obligations, which persist even when the attraction and the satisfaction have ebbed", "for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and they shall be one flesh" Gen 2:24.³⁶ As Jack and Judith Balswick noted, "if God's actions toward Israel are taken as a model, parenting of children [hence, family relationships] will be characterized by loving, caring, responding, disciplining, giving, respecting, knowing, and forgiving".³⁷

Loving God Through the Shema as a Community of Families

The church as a family can live out the Shema by remaining true to being committed to one another as a community of families. In Luke's gospel Jesus broadens the concept of a biological family to a spiritual family, Luke 8:19-21. A message was delivered to Jesus that his mother and brothers wanted to see him. His response was in the form of a question regarding who is his mother and brothers. Jesus upgrades the given

³⁵ Dean Borgman. *Foundations for Youth Ministry*, 123.

³⁶ Ray Anderson and Dennis Guernsey, *Theological Perspectives on Family Life*, http://web.campbell.edu/faculty/vandergriffk/foundations_covenant.html, 2.

³⁷ Balswick, Jack and Judith. *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home*, 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007, 1.

definition of the natural family by opening the door to others to become his spiritual family. Jesus invites anyone who participates in the will of his Father to be a part of this spiritual family. He removes the restriction of being tied by an ancestral bloodline and replaces it with a different community of connection. The special consideration for immediate family is no longer valid. The family tree now embraces people from all walks of life with one condition: you must enter this sacred relationship of a spiritual relationship with him. Families, youth leaders and workers, pastors and all those who will believe are now included. The families of the church can become a family in Christ regardless of their ethnic, financial, or social background.

The family invitation of Luke 8 coupled with the call and commission of Matthew 28 calls youth leaders and workers to invite other families to do the same: make disciples of all generations. Jesus instructs his disciples to go into all the earth and preach the gospel and to feed his sheep. Those who are united with Jesus by faith are admitted to the closest union with Christ and become one with him, his family.³⁸ Dr. Kara Powell in *The Sticky Faith Guide for Your Family* describes a type of family community through the power of five faith-building adults in the life of a young person. Powell and her husband invited five men who were already identified as being influential in their son's life to give one piece of life advice and one piece of spiritual advice.³⁹ These men are now a part of their son's community, his private team for his growth holistically. Powell notes:

“The variable most correlated with mature faith in high school and college – the silver shavings of Sticky faith – is involvement in intergenerational worship and relationships. In our study of five hundred youth group graduates, bringing the generations to sit shoulder-to-shoulder or look eye-to-eye was more important for

³⁸ William Pringle, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998), 91.

³⁹ Kara Powell, *Sticky Faith Guide for Families*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 95.

long-term faith than any other youth group activity. Yes, according to Psalm 89:1 it is possible to make God's faithfulness known to all generations."⁴⁰

Loving God through the Shema can be taught in urban environments. Just as Timothy was reminded of the faith he learned from infancy, 2 Tim 3:14, 15 and the faith he learned from his mother and grandmother, 2 Tim 1:5, youth leaders can teach the families in their congregations. The Shema is a call to equip youth and their families to express their love for God on three levels:

1. Love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength – Matt 22:34, Mk 12:30, Lk 10:27
2. Love their neighbor as they do themselves – Matt 22:39, Mk 12:31, Lk 10:27
3. Love each other like Christ has loved us. Jn 13:34,35

When Jesus was asked the question about what is the greatest commandment in Mark 12:28-31 he responds with “love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul and strength. This is the first commandment is and the second is like unto the first; love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commands hang all the law and the prophets. There are no greater commandments than these.” When we love God with all of our being, nothing else can come before God. The love of God is the leading grace of a renewed soul.⁴¹ Loving our neighbor as we do ourselves positions us to build up the assets God has placed in our youth, both the internal and external assets. These necessary assets ensure the successful development of youth in our families and communities. Loving each other like Christ loved us stretches us to go beyond our natural love to a sacrificial love for our neighbor, the person in need of our help.

⁴⁰ Kara Powell, *Sticky Faith Guide for Families*, 96-97.

⁴¹ Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible, Vol. I – Genesis to Deuteronomy, (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Company), 750.

To love God through Shema as a community of families is depicted in a television commercial regarding what is the best parenting style. There are multiple groups of like minded parents taunting the other like minded groups about issues such as cloth diapers versus disposable diapers, fathers taking care of infants versus mothers and stay at home moms versus working moms. While the parents continue to argue, one of the strollers with an infant in it becomes loose and rolls down a hill towards a lake. All the parents run in the direction of the stroller, regardless of their parenting style preference. When the child is rescued all of the parents realize it truly takes a community to raise a child. Shema is tool for the urban environment to rediscover that it truly takes a community of people to raise a child.

One of the ongoing discussions in the youth ministry realm compares the professional, programmatic ministry model to the family-based ministry model. The statement “balance is achieved on the way to the extremes” is true regarding this argument.⁴² Dean Borgman in *Foundations for Youth Ministry* notes that we must pay special attention to the family because it is a critical base for all cultures. He calls for the collaboration of youth leaders, the church and families for an integrated approach to youth and family development. Paul Renfro recorded three streams of integrated approaches to family ministry in *Perspectives on Family Ministry: 3 Views*. He defines each view, 1) the family integrated ministry, 2) family based ministry and 3) family equipping ministry in detail with response from other youth ministry experts.⁴³

⁴² Ken Mariwalla, *Random Thoughts: Pleasures of Thinking Wonderfully*, (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Corp., 2012), 101.

⁴³ Paul Renfro, et al, *Perspectives on Family Ministry: 3 Views*, ed. Timothy Paul Jones (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2009), 52.

Each stream has its benefits and challenges. The family-integrated model calls for the elimination of all age-segregated ministry, makes all events intergenerational and requires parents to take the lead on discipling their children. The family-based model keeps youth ministry but calls for a collaboration of all church ministries with the family as the foundation. The family-equipping model also keeps youth ministry in tack with an intentional focus of all church programming towards the equipping of parents for the discipleship of children. All of these models agree that the family has a prominent place in the spiritual development of youth. They differ on methodology.

Ministry in the urban environment provides a few challenges to the family integrated model in particular. This model assumes three key ingredients, 1) a commitment to age integrated ministry, 2) a commitment to evangelism and discipleship through the home and, 3) biblical church leadership.⁴⁴ First, the urban church did not fully adapt the suburban model of youth ministry primarily due to economics. Urban churches could not afford the full or part time youth leader to manage all of the programing. Intergenerational volunteers supported the youth in urban congregations on several levels such as Sunday School teachers, van drivers and usher board staff. Secondly the family make up in the urban environment is different from the suburban household. Fathers are not present in mass and may not attend church on a regular basis. The mother measures the spiritual temperature of the home and not the father. This leads to the third point of biblical church leadership that is male dominated. This concept is foreign to many urban families and the youth leaders that serve their homes.

Youth leaders and workers in the urban environment have an important challenge to holistically minister to youth and their families with the church as the lead. Families

⁴⁴ Paul Renfro, *Perspectives on Family Ministry*, 62.

today need intervention and often rely on the youth leaders to support their families through many tough circumstances they encounter. However many youth leaders are trained to create and run programs for youth but not how to successfully minister to families, especially in the urban environment. I propose introducing the authoritative community concept as an “urban church village” to include a partnership of the youth worker as a facilitator of this process. The family is a system that is interconnected with multiple external systems that affect youth. The church must take the approach of Jesus and include those who are securing the wellbeing of youth as part of the larger family community.

CHAPTER 3

CONTRIBUTIONS TO HOLISTIC URBAN YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRY

From Individualistic to Holistic Youth Ministry

In many ways youth ministry since the 1940's has concentrated on the individual young person in an age segregated society. Slowly youth ministry literature about youth and their families has moved us in a different direction towards family-based ministry. Early adopters such as Ginny Ward Holderness invited youth leaders to accept a team approach to youth ministry that connects the family with all the church's youth in the total life of the congregation.¹ Dean Borgman in *When Kumbaya Is Not Enough* introduced a discussion with youth leaders around the topic of the theology of family and peers.² The urban church based youth ministry can no longer ignore the reality and influence of the family in the life of a young person.

Family-based ministry is step towards holistic youth ministry that plays out differently from the suburbs to the urban area. In the suburban context authors Mark DeVries and Jim Burns are advocates for incorporating families into youth ministry, supporting the need for every teenage to have an extended Christian family of significant adults.³ Every ministry of the church focuses on intentional intergenerational activities. Although the ministries remain separate, there is a clear expectation that everything benefits the family. DeVries notes the challenges facing the nuclear family and encourages the church to be creative around providing supports for youth.

¹ Ginny Ward Holderness, *Youth Ministry: The New Team Approach*, (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1981), 11.

² Dean Borgman, *When Kumbaya Is Not Enough*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1997), 104.

³ Mark DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 79.

Over the years several types of family ministry models have been created, each with a differentiating aspect. The family-integrated ministry model also known as the family-driven or family discipleship model eliminates all age segregated classes and events.⁴ Generational worship is encouraged and the family is the sole delivery mechanism for spiritual development. Another model is the family-equipping ministry where although the youth ministry remains in place every function is approached with the parent in mind as the primary disciple-maker. Last but not least the programmatic ministry model considers only the church's programs, sometimes at the detriment of the family. Urban families encounter more challenges to these models making it difficult for an urban youth worker to readily adopt one over the other. Church-based urban youth leaders can easily default to the programmatic ministry model with minimal thought to the effects on the family.

The Urban Family and Its Systems

More and more families are living in urban areas than in the past. The United States Census Bureau reported that in 1950 only 56% of the population lived in the city. That number increased to 76% in 1989 and held steady at 79% in 2000.⁵ The urbanization of communities during the mid century created new challenges for families. The major support systems of the family, school and work encountered a different set of demands. The family structure changed when fathers went off to war, mothers became the financial provider and children were left home alone. Urban youth were faced with poverty, gang

⁴ Paul Reno, Brandon Shields and Jay Strother, *Perspectives on Family Ministry: 3 Views*, Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2009, 42.

⁵ US Census: *Census 2000 Population Statistics* (US Government, 2000), accessed November 29, 2013, <http://www.Fhwa.dot.gov>.

activity, drug abuse, illiteracy, teenage pregnancy and other social problems at a greater rate than their suburban counterparts.⁶

Today, urban families are suffering from a myriad of issues, and the urban church has the solution to the pain our youth and families are facing on a daily basis. Through the examination of the overall relationship system within families, youth leaders will understand the relational systems and how each member functions within their position. This way of thinking about the personal difficulties of youth and their family issues is called family therapy. Family therapy is a compilation of two mid-20th century strains: one speaks about the way we think about ourselves and the other speaks about the way we think about the world around us.⁷ The complexity of the urban family requires a well-defined leader in order to have successful, healthy congregations according to Rabbi Edwin Friedman.⁸ Youth leaders and workers should be trained to understand family dynamics on a basic level beginning with their own family of origin. This knowledge will provide a solid platform for supporting youth and families in their congregations and communities.

Ethnic families primarily reside in urban areas. Black families in particular have lost the connection with the internal family structure that assists every people group in achieving security and passing on culture to the next generation.⁹ In *High Impact African American Churches* George Barna states that the black family in the urban environment is still feeling the effects of slavery today through the breaking of the male spirit and the

⁶ Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, *Youth Ministry in City Churches: Proven Tips From Over 40 Youth Ministry Veterans* (Loveland, CO: Thom Schultz Publication, Inc., 1989), 24.

⁷ Edwin Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1985), 13.

⁸ Edwin Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue*, ix.

⁹ George Barna, and Harry R. Jackson, Jr. *High Impact African American Churches* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, Gospel Light, 2004), 128.

lack of protection for black children.¹⁰ When the father was removed from the home, a trend was established that has been difficult to reverse. Today, the black family is still carrying the scars of the division with two out of every three newborn blacks in homes with maternal leadership.¹¹ Parental conflict from divorce also contributes to the factors that affect families financially, morally, spiritually, socially and emotionally. The children are left without the full protection of both parents, thus requiring support from other sources. The urban church is a great resource for families seeking additional support for their children's holistic development.

The Urban Church

For decades the urban church, especially the black church, has served its community's needs under the widely used saying 'it takes a village to raise a child.' This group of caring and equipped adults, the village, worked together to supply and connect the child and family to whatever resources were needed to successfully bring that child into adulthood. There are several theologians and historians such as Cornel West who believe that the black church has lost the sense of community that is essential for survival.¹² West points out the loss as being relational involving the loss of love, communal connections, purpose and meaning.¹³ The restoration of the village concept in local urban churches is also known as authoritative communities according to the report to the nation from the Commission on Children at Risk. Authoritative communities are

¹⁰ George Barna, and Harry R. Jackson, Jr. *High Impact African American Churches*, 124.

¹¹ George Barna, and Harry R. Jackson, Jr. *High Impact African American Churches*, 129.

¹² For other theologians and historians see Wimberly, *African American Pastoral Care Revised Edition* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), viii; Johnny B. Hill, ed., *Multidimensional Ministry For Today's Black Family* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2007), 28; and Lee N. June, *The Black Family: Past, Present and Future: Perspectives of Sixteen Black Christian Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 133.

¹³ Cornell West, *Race Matters* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 22-24.

groups that live out the type of connectedness that children lack.

In *Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities*, the crisis facing American children is linked to the lack of connection to other people and deep connection to moral and spiritual meaning. Scientific evidence now portrays the human child as being hardwired to connect for a human touch. Many of the mental, emotional and behavioral problems in youth can be traced back to this finding. A renewing of authoritative communities, the village, should be the primary goal of all who are concerned about youth and their families. When the church takes the lead in creating community, the moral compass is restored. The difference the church makes, in contrast to other community agencies, is the God factor: faith in God to change the hearts of families and situations surrounding them. Well-trained, knowledgeable, skilled adults combined with mountain-moving faith can produce results beyond human creation.

Churches have a process to go through in order to become this village. A congregation cannot become the nurturing village it should be for its children until its identity and its responsibility in this regard are fully understood and embraced.¹⁴ Youth and families who arrive at urban churches may come in broken, dysfunctional and unbelieving and grow to become whole, healthy, functional and full of faith. Other youth and families can be healed through their capacity to reciprocate in the lives of those they are connected to in their circles. Entire communities can be reached one family at a time through the urban church. As collaborations with other churches and secular agencies form, positive changes occur throughout urban communities. The urban church as a

¹⁴ Terry W. York and David Bolin, *The Congregation As The Village*. (Waco, TX: Baylor University School of Social Work: Family and Community Ministries, Summer, 2007), Accessed November 20, 2013, 10.

training center can provide the leadership needed for the spiritual development of families.

Urban youth leaders and clergy are poised to reach urban families better than any other ministry in the church. Youth are more likely to attend an event and bring other family members with them. If the youth worker is trained beyond how to run programs, this can be a great way to introduce families to the church and faith-based resources. Families facing life transitions in the urban setting, especially African American families tend to seek out help from clergy before seeking help from other institutions.¹⁵ In the African American community, the black pastor or lay leader such as a youth leader, is asked to respond to the emotional, interpersonal and spiritual needs of persons in crisis.¹⁶

Urban, church-based youth leaders need to be adequately trained to minister to youth and their families in order to provide the necessary resources. According to the 2008 UYWI Workers and Leaders National Survey, only 37.3% of the polled youth workers and leaders could name three resources to help urban youth workers understand youth¹⁷. Most urban youth workers have not received any professional training in youth ministries beyond what their denomination may offer. Generally they are bi-vocational, unable to take time to attend conferences and cannot afford the pricy suburban youth training conferences. Seminary classes for the youth leader are not considered unless the pastoral ministry is on the horizon. Even with access to the above-mentioned resources, usually they are not geared towards urban families with the complexity of the issues

¹⁵ Edward P. Wimberly, *African American Pastoral Care, Revised Edition*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1991), 47.

¹⁶ Edward P. Wimberly, *African American Pastoral Care Revised Edition*, vii.

¹⁷ 2008 UYWI Workers and Leaders National Survey, (Akron, OH: The Center for Marketing and Opinion Research, LLC, 2008), 36.

faced in their environments.

Urban-church based youth leaders need training in order to navigate the complex family, school and work systems facing their youth. These systems are interfacing on greater levels than in the past undergirded with a multi-ethnic and multi-economic foundation. The urban church-based youth leader encounters multiple factors that must be addressed in order to facilitate, along with the parent, the spiritual development of youth. Proper training to identify and negotiate these systems is necessary for urban church-based youth leaders.

Urban senior pastors are key to the training of their youth leaders. Traditionally the senior pastor has received some training for their role as the pastor of the church through seminary, conferences, workshops, mentoring and books about pastoring. Most urban youth leaders receive little to no training about urban youth ministry, let alone how to address the complex issues facing urban youth and their families today. The selection process for urban youth workers generally consists of an expression of a desire to work with young people and not the verification of skill sets. By requiring youth leaders to undergo training for youth ministry in the urban environment senior pastors equip and empower generations of leadership. Senior pastors can provide access to training through workshops, conferences and materials.

The training of urban youth leaders for the holistic development of urban youth and their families will be examined in four parts:

1. The need for holistic support of urban youth and their families
2. Urban Church-Based Youth Ministry
3. Urban Systems
4. Data from surveys of urban youth leaders and workers

Each of these components is crucial to document the training underbelly of holistic urban

church-based youth ministry. Urban youth leaders and workers are often responsible for developing their own training schedule. Many are urban practitioners, innately serving youth through on-the-job training. Taking time for professional development in the area of youth ministry should be mandatory for urban youth leaders. The literature compiled in this chapter will give an urban church a solid foundation upon which to build a comprehensive training program for those ministering to youth and families.

This thesis-project defines urban youth ministry according to Fernando Arzola, Jr. of *Toward A Prophetic Youth Ministry* as having three identifying components: they are Christian, they are located in the city and they minister to youth.¹⁸ All parts of the city are included, the inner, poor neighborhoods as well as the wealthier ones. Ethnic and economic diversity are common in the city describing the body of Christ in one community.

The Need for Holistic Support of Urban Youth and Families

A holistic way of thinking seeks to encompass and integrate multiple layers of meaning and experience rather than defining human possibilities narrowly.¹⁹ Holistic urban youth ministry begins with the spiritual development of youth and extends to every area of life that affects urban youth. The whole potential of a young person is developed spiritually, emotionally, academically, physically and socially, as Jesus' childhood exemplifies, Luke 2:40.

¹⁸ Fernando Arzola, Jr., *Toward A Prophetic Youth Ministry: Theory and Praxis in Urban Context*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 17.

¹⁹ Miller, R. (2000). 'A brief introduction to holistic education', *the encyclopedia of informal education*, <http://infed.org/mobi/a-brief-introduction-to-holistic-education/>, accessed May 11, 2015, 1.

Every child that encounters an urban youth ministry carries a complex set of family circumstances, some less complex than others. The complexity of the family begins with the home base. Over the years the evolution of the urban family has changed the composition of the foundation stones in the immediate family unit. These changes have introduced additional levels of relationships within the home. The family was easily defined by a set of known socially accepted terms that described the connection to each member. Below is a listing of the changes in the family unit over the years:

- Traditional – father, mother, and children living together
- Separated/Divorced – parents and children not living together
- Blended – parent, step-parent, children and step children living together
- Cohabiting – biological parents not married living with children
- Single parents – one parent lives with children
- Foster homes/adoption, – children living in homes without either biological parent
- Co-parenting – children live between homes of both biological parents who were never married and never intended to be married

The extended family of grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins and all blood relatives used to be a constant network to rely on in times of need. Over the years this extended network has fragmented and families are left with minimal internal support. Immigrant families often have an additional language barrier to face. Governmental agencies and community supports have risen in attempt to meet the challenge of supporting families. Youth ministry can assist with this challenge to support families, even in complicated circumstances if youth leaders are properly trained to do so.

The research of *Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities* identified a crisis among U.S. children and adolescents. A group of doctors, research scientists, mental health and youth service professionals have noted the rising rates of mental problems and emotional distress. Youth mental and behavioral health has

deteriorated causing high and rising rates of depression, anxiety, attention deficit, conduct disorders and other mental health related problems.²⁰ This research associates a large part of the crisis to the lack of connectedness during the American childhood. Connectedness is defined as close connections to other people and deep connections to moral and spiritual meaning.²¹ These connections are supplied from groups of people found in social institutions such as the family, faith-based, civic, educational, and recreational. Due to the weakening of these institutions U.S. children are suffering and no longer receive the support to grow holistically.

According to *Hardwired*, the family is the first and most basic association of civil society.²² The family represents the most enduring and formative relationships in a child's life showing love, discipline, and permanence.²³ Families are able to teach principles that cannot be taught by law concerning moral standards and personal conduct. These principles are necessary for maintaining a civil society. These principles include honesty, trust, loyalty, cooperation, self-restraint, civility, compassion, personal responsibility and respect for others.²⁴ There is now scientific evidence demonstrating that the human person is hard-wired to connect to close attachments to other people. It begins with our mothers, fathers and extended family and continues outward to the

²⁰ Report to the Nation from the Commission on Children at Risk, *Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities*, YMCA/Dartmouth Medical School, (Institute for American Values, 2003), 5.

²¹ The Commission on Children at Risk, *Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities*, 6.

²² The Commission on Children at Risk, *Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities*, 40.

²³ The Commission on Children at Risk, *Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities*, 40.

²⁴ The Commission on Children at Risk, *Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities*, 40.

greater community.²⁵ The place where this need for connectedness is met is called authoritative communities; groups of people who are committed to one another over time who model what it means to be a good person and live a good life.

Edwin Friedman of *Generation to Generation* is a Jewish Rabbi and a family therapist who outlines the necessity of the church to take the lead to facilitate the growth and development of youth and families through the training of its clergy and leaders. Friedman agrees with the findings of *Hardwired* because as a therapist he has served several complex family units through a family systems point of view. There are multiple ways families interact in different settings and Friedman has developed clear strategies for clergy to understand the emotional side of the family process. *Hardwired* and Friedman combined create a strong argument supported with scientific data of the need for the church to reclaim the leadership of youth and family empowerment.

There has been a steady decline of the family unit during the period of the 1960's through the 1990's. Marriages are not happening at the rate of the past, with divorce and single parenting on the rise.²⁶ Friedman argues that marriages are successful to the degree that the entire nuclear family is 100% symptom-free, leaving most human marriages with a rating no greater than 70%.²⁷ Without solid marriages in the foundation stone of the family, children lose the connectedness to either a male or female role model. Specifically, the lack of adult males in the home creates generativity, a term coined by psychiatrist Erik Erikson about the concern for establishing and guiding the next

²⁵ The Commission on Children at Risk, *Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities*, 14.

²⁶ The Commission on Children at Risk, *Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities*, 40.

²⁷ The Commission on Children at Risk, *Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities*, 69.

generation.²⁸ Adult males are important during childhood as the need to attach social significance and meaning to gender is high during this season in a child's life. Neglecting these needs during this phase of youth development can be detrimental to the youth and family.

Another aspect affecting the family unit in a negative way per *Hardwired* is the increase in individualism or self-centeredness and consumerism. The drive for self-satisfaction has replaced the communal good. All of these factors have reduced the authority of the family, rendering it weak and unable to be successful without additional supports. *Hardwired* reflects on an analysis of 269 studies, as far back as the 1950's, linking self-reported anxiety and depression among U.S. youth due primarily to the decline of "social connectedness."²⁹ Other studies have confirmed that the increase of childhood problems in the U.S. can be attributed to the decline of networks of meaningful relationships with adults. Friedman says parents who accept the fact that when children are comfortable at home they are less likely to be influenced by outside systems that would cause anxiety in the home.³⁰ Remaining connected to family regardless of its complexity contributes to the positive development of youth.

In *Generation to Generation* Friedman's family theory includes the extended family as an entire network that is important in the life of a child. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, siblings, etc. all add significant pieces to the holistic development of families. In the past the extended family was a crucial part of youth and family development. Due to the fragmentation of the family, this network is no longer close at

²⁸ The Commission on Children at Risk, *Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities*, 41.

²⁹ The Commission on Children at Risk, *Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities*, 42.

³⁰ Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 31.

hand to lend support or information. Patterns of behavior surface in each generation, turning the family tree of knowledge into a family tree of life. If family members are able to step back and address the reoccurring issues, present generations can learn from the patterns of the past and make changes for posterity.

Youth leaders must assess each child in order to determine how to holistically develop that young person and their family's ministry needs. The medical profession, legal profession and social service industries require an initial assessment before services are offered. Urban youth leaders must be trained to gather information over time through building relationships with the young person and ultimately their family. Urban youth leaders must be trained to recognize and identify the youth and family needs and connect them to available resources.

Using Assets to Build Urban Youth and Families

Research by the Search Institute resulted in a measuring rod for the healthy development of youth called assets. The Forty Developmental Assets (Appendix A) were developed in 1990 as a framework that identifies a set of skills, experiences, relationships, and behaviors that enable young people to develop into successful and contributing adults.³¹ The incorporation of these assets by urban youth leaders in urban families support and empower youth and their families holistically. These influencing factors total 40 assets, 20 internal and 20 external assets that contribute to the wellbeing of a child's development. The more assets a child receives through their primary and secondary environments as they develop, the probability of growing into a successful

³¹ "40 Developmental Assets", *Search Institute* 1990, <http://search-institute.org>, accessed December 19, 2013.

adult increases.

Social communities, like the neighborhood and church, play pivotal roles in the development of youth. In *Good Kids from Bad Neighborhoods* and *Hardwired* statistics show that the social context of a youth can alter their genetic expression.³² There is a gene in children that drives their behavior and manifests differently depending on the environment. The social environments we create for our children, good and bad, can greatly influence how a child responds. However it is not impossible for good youth to come from challenging social environments. Scientific evidence now points to the importance of addressing the nature and nurturing of children based on their environment. Reggie Joiner of *Think Orange* says that when you reactivate the family environment by combining the church, an everyday faith is built in the lives of youth and their families.³³ Youth leaders must care about families and take the time to invest in their development. Creating growth environments for youth and their parents in church settings provides families a safe space to interface and meet their challenges together.

There is a direct link between the numbers of the amount of assets in youth who attend faith institutions verses those who are not involved in a congregation. An analysis of the data from 6th to 12 graders in public schools surveyed by the Search Institute during the 1999 through 2000 school year reported an average of 19.3 assets out of 40 assets. Youth who were involved in a congregation reported an average of 21.4 assets verses 15.9 assets for those who were not involved in a congregation.³⁴ The additional

³² The Commission on Children at Risk, *Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities* 19.

³³ Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange: Imagine the Impact When Church and Family Collide...* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009), 158.

³⁴ "Faith and Developmental Assets," Toolkit for Integrating Developmental Assets in Your Congregation, Search Institute, 2005, accessed January 22, 2014, <http://www.gotassets.net>.

assets gained were strengthened or cultivated by a youth leader or adult in a local congregation. Per a report from the Search Institute, the church environment provides a number of resources to youth and their families including:³⁵

- Enriching activities for youth
- A physically safe space
- Ongoing support for families
- Opportunities for youth to serve, lead and contribute
- Intergenerational community
- Guidance for youth as they are shaping their identity, values, beliefs and commitments

Faith-based organizations have always played a central role in the formation and reformation of North American communities.³⁶ There is a renewed interest in partnerships with the church to support urban families. As churches move towards more asset-based community development for families they increase the capacity for families to build from the inside out.

There is a need to support urban youth and their families. They cannot self generate all of the relationships and resources to be successful. The new role of the youth leader is to serve as a facilitator and discerner in order to assist in the spiritual development of the youth they serve. Youth leaders properly trained, supplied with resources and given access to holistically reach families make a difference in their communities. The complex and dynamic relationship between the biological and physical parts of youth in urban environments requires a skilled youth leader who can navigate the waters of change and challenge. Training urban youth leaders how to facilitate multiple relationships benefits the current and next generation.

³⁵ Faith and Developmental Assets. <http://www.gotassets.net>, accessed January 22, 2014.

³⁶ Mark Senter III, *When God Shows Up: A History of Protestant Youth Ministry in America*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 44.

Using the 40 Assets as a guideline, congregations can create multiple supports for families. These may differ per community but there is still plenty of common ground. For example an urban church may only have volunteer staff that are unable to provide adequate access during the daytime. A system of support can be created on a rotation basis for parents to have access to a youth leader, especially during crisis moments. This builds trust in the youth and family members knowing that there is spiritual leadership when they are going through rough times. Other programs and activities can be created as well for youth and their families linking generations and multiple families in one community together. The programs created with the 40 Assets as a backdrop are intentional fruit bearing programs that measure success in a tangible, biblical way.

Urban Church-Based Youth Ministry

Youth ministry in America has endured a number of cycles over the years as captured by Mark Senter III in *When God Shows Up*. As times changed so did the methodology of the youth leader.³⁷ Most of the models adopted by churches in the urban environment were not effective and lack relevancy because they required a suburban framework: a full time, professional youth leader and a budget. The major difference between urban and suburban youth ministries boils down to one word: resources. Staff, buildings, finances, materials, training, etc. are given in abundance to do effective youth ministry in suburban settings. Youth leaders working in an urban environment are not privy to such resources and often end up running bare bones youth ministries.

Urban church-based youth ministry desperately needs to be redefined and restructured. Church size does not factor into the necessary changes, larger urban

³⁷ Mark H. Senter, III, *When God Shows Up*, 268.

churches are also in need of an overhaul. Urban youth ministry cannot simply regurgitate the old paradigms of suburban youth ministry. Big events, social outings, youth services and other programs have lost their edge and many youth leaders find themselves recreating the same old things. Youth are disengaged and distracted by other demands in school, their peers and on the streets. Some youth are attracted to the idea of having their own money and drop youth ministry as soon as they can get a job, some to support the family.

Urban churches require a slightly different structure and execution than suburban churches. Often urban churches are financially unable to hire a full time or part time youth worker thus resorting to volunteers. Professional youth ministry training options are limited in the urban environment leaving youth leaders desiring the tools and keys needed for ministry to youth and their families. On the job training is the norm and much of that is fixed on trial and error. Current tools for urban youth leaders often consist of tweaking suburban curriculum and program models to fit the urban environment.

A new wineskin for urban youth ministry is in order. The creative, organic development of the correct structure needed for the urban environment may now be in the hands of the local church.³⁸ Most of the youth ministry of the first decade of the twenty first century designed its structure and programming with the suburban, white congregation in mind. Urban communities of color, especially non-white churches did not buy into the professionalization of the youth leader, could not afford the pricy youth trainings and did not submit to the isolation approach of its youth from the congregation. African American, Caribbean, Asian and Latino churches often face cultural and language

³⁸ Mark H. Senter, III. *When God Shows Up*, 290.

challenges that make it difficult to honor their traditions and embrace the changes of the American culture. These challenges along with the societal issues youth and families face in the urban culture such as economics, sexuality, violence and justice issues require urban churches to address youth ministry in a more comprehensive manner.

Eugene Roehlkepartain of *Youth Ministry in City Churches* believes that each urban church must develop its own plan to reach youth in their community. He states that since no city is exactly alike, the youth ministry models will also vary. Although the ministry components may be similar there is no one size fits all approach in urban youth ministry.

Roehlkepartain defines four types of neighborhood, urban churches:³⁹

1. Inner city churches – Generally located in and serve the impoverished areas of the city. Limited resources due to the population of people served.
2. Revitalized community churches – Located in neighborhoods that have been revitalized, these churches are reaching ethnically and economically diverse people.
3. Ethnic churches – These ethnic specific churches are vested in the community and tend to have difficulty with change especially when older members move away and new people don't connect.
4. Storefront churches – Smaller, neighborhood churches generally disconnected from larger denominations renting space in commercial spaces.

It is important for the leaders in a local church to take the time to understand their community. Conducting an assessment in the form of an asset map can identify the felt needs of the community.⁴⁰ Often urban youth require more support than a traditional bible study or youth group. Urban youth leaders meet natural and spiritual needs of students and their families. In *Hardwired* it is noted that religious institutions are

³⁹ Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, *Youth Ministry in City Churches*, 84.

⁴⁰ Virginia Ward, *Mapping Community Assets*, San Diego, (California, Summer 2007), National Network of Youth Ministries.

recognized as one of the strongest civic institutions in low-income neighborhoods.⁴¹ Urban churches can provide better leadership by empowering youth leaders to build authoritative communities to support youth and families. This is a practical approach, enabling youth leaders to connect with the multiple systems that surround our youth.

Basic Structure for Urban Youth Ministry

Urban churches need an appropriate structure by which to do ministry. Duffy Robbins in *This Way to Youth Ministry* provides several tools regarding ministry models, programs, philosophies, adolescent spirituality and other components by describing the journey to successful youth ministry as an adventure. The urban adventure requires each church to create a ministry that is unique to its environment. Urban youth ministry bridges economic, ethnic and educational gaps more successfully than churches in other settings yet struggle in meeting the needs of youth.⁴² C. Anne Davis in *Youth Ministry in City Churches* suggests the creation of a church based urban youth ministry in a four-step process:⁴³

1. Identify resources – Church and youth leaders should begin by listening to God for what He wants their church to be for youth in that community. Leaders then look within and without the congregation for spiritual, people and facility resources.
2. Identify needs – The needs of youth vary per neighborhood. Assessments and surveys of all types, especially one-on-one conversations with youth and families prove helpful to gather information.
3. Construct an action plan – The ministry leadership team should develop clear plans that combine the resources and needs together.
4. Implement and evaluate – After the plan is created and executed, all should assess its effectiveness.

⁴¹ The Commission on Children at Risk, *Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities*. (New York: Institute for American Values, 2003), 45.

⁴² Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, *Youth Ministry in City Churches*, 26-27.

⁴³ Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, *Youth Ministry in City Churches*, 124-129.

Dean Borgman in *When Kumbaya Is Not Enough* expands this thought into a ten-step process that assists urban youth workers with an ongoing evaluation (Appendix B).

Roehlkepartain and Borgman agree that youth ministry begins with leadership of the ministry, namely the youth leaders and the senior pastor. Ultimately the ministry to youth in the church and community will rise or fall based on the connection, support and interaction between these two entities.

Borgman and Robbins also address the need to clarify the theology of the youth ministry, keeping in mind that the primary task of youth ministry is to focus on God.⁴⁴ Urban church youth leaders tend to be practitioners, often ministering without a written theology behind their actions. Borgman says that it is from a theological base that a church considers its philosophy and then develops a model from the core beliefs, goals and core values.⁴⁵ He contends that clear values and beliefs lead to mission and purpose statements, and then vision statements, which leads to a strategy statement. Once all of this is in place the activities and programs can be selected in alignment with the plans. Clear outcomes can be identified and agreed upon by the youth leaders and church leadership. Periodic assessments of the outcomes occurs and adjustments are made as needed. Successful long-term youth ministry is difficult without written plans.

Robbins in *This Way to Youth Ministry* models the necessity of the methodological training of urban youth leaders. The flow beginning from the inside out of a leader is consistent with Jesus' training of the disciples. Youth leaders need personal

⁴⁴ Duffy Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry: An Introduction to the Adventure*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 18.

⁴⁵ Dean Borgman, *Foundations for Youth Ministry: Theological Engagement with Teen Life and Culture*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 273.

development first in order to effectively minister to youth in any context. Next, after the internal work has been done, the external work can begin. This must be addressed thoroughly in order to produce fruitful youth ministries on any level.

Robbins' format of gathering various youth ministry models to share with urban youth workers is a comprehensive plan. In particular the funnel of programming model will aid in the development of activities for every level of youth attendee.⁴⁶ Urban youth ministry can be heavily program based, forgetting the spiritual aspect of youth. Intentional programming helps youth leaders to target certain youth to attend specific events. Efrem Smith in *Raising Up Young Heroes: Developing A Revolutionary Youth Ministry* encourages youth leaders in all settings, urban, suburban and rural to move from the programmatic to developmental in their approaches. Smith states:

Youth leaders must be proactive in developing youth ministries that impact young people in ways that affect every area of their lives. Within this holistic approach to youth ministry, strategic initiatives can be developed, which give direction to ministry models and lead to measurable outcomes. This moves a youth ministry from a youth-group model with a programmatic foundation to a developmental model, which focuses on the holistic development of young people.⁴⁷

Urban youth leaders can learn how to connect every event, program and ministry context together for the holistic development of urban youth.

The results of an analysis of Borgman and Robbins' models have produced the following basic structure for training youth leaders in holistic urban youth ministry.

1. Well-trained staff – This is paramount for proper execution in the urban environment. Too often the quality of staff suffers due to lack of training. Each ministry must have internal and external opportunities for training and personal development, including seminary, conferences, skills training, and other sources. Youth leaders and pastors training must include sessions on the

⁴⁶ Duffy Robbins, *This Way*, Funnel of Programming, 508.

⁴⁷ Efrem Smith, *Raising Up Young Heroes*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 39.

goal of holistic urban youth ministry, youth culture, personal and sexual identity, justice, systems thinking, family and community as starters. Training must become a viable part of the culture of the church for all leaders.

2. Family Connecting Ministry – The family is an important aspect of youth development and cannot be isolated from the church. Even with the distractions, distresses and dysfunctions in the urban environment there must be intentional engagement with every member of the family. The youth leaders should be a resource to the entire family and not just the young person. Youth ministry should benefit and bless urban families and not become a stumbling block to their growth and development. Parents may not come to the church services but a relationship must be built for the betterment of the youth. Once parents are connected to the ministry it is easier for the youth leaders to gain access into the other systems of a youth's world. The urban church should serve as a hub for holistic development of the entire family.
3. Discipleship Making Focus – The great commission is the cornerstone of youth ministry, making youth disciples. The curriculum and all programming must submit to this goal. Training urban youth workers how to utilize the four questions that lie at the heart of youth ministry according to Borgman will equip youth to have relational conversations, get at family stories, develop curricula and lead small group discussion. Raising and nurturing youth leaders who can disciple youth in urban communities must be at the heart of the ministry.
4. Community Connection – Urban youth ministry cannot happen void of its surrounding community. The youth leaders must be interactive in the neighborhood surrounding the church building as well becoming knowledgeable about the people attending the church. Leaders should assess the needs of the community and make every effort to connect to the pulse of the neighborhood. This entails connecting to the justice, police, health, academic, business and civic sections of the community. (Appendix C) Building these networks provides a connected system to the five primary social systems of influence for youth and families.⁴⁸
5. Administrative Arm – This is the weakest part of urban youth ministry, a support system to undergird the youth leaders. This arm begins with the senior pastor of the church. The pastor and board must agree to support the youth ministry financially and physically with space, resources and calendar time. The youth leaders need access to resources to effectively reach and minister to youth in the urban environment. According to Roehlkepartain, most churches have the primary resources for youth ministry: spiritual resources, people resources and facility resources.⁴⁹ A team of administrators is needed for planning, implementation, ongoing evaluation and assessment. The theology of youth ministry regarding why the church ministers to youth establishes the basis for the model each church will use.⁵⁰ Church-based logic models should

⁴⁸ Dean Borgman, *Foundations for Youth Ministry*, 127.

⁴⁹ Eugene C. Roehlkepartain. *Youth Ministry in City Churches*, 124.

⁵⁰ Dean Borgman. *Foundations for Youth Ministry*, 273.

- be created so all members of the team and church leadership are clear about the desired outcomes in the lives of the youth. (Appendix D – Logic Model)
6. Relevant Resources - An ongoing issue for urban youth leaders continues to be the availability of authentic, relevant materials for urban youth. At one point the pickings were slim. As materials were added to the market some totally swung the pendulum to the opposite side of an unbalanced ethnic community, falling into the sins of the suburban authors. It is important to maintain a healthy balance of resources in order to obtain healthy urban youth. This is where partnerships can be beneficial to supplying the necessary items for ministry in urban areas. Urban tried and proven training materials and resources need to be added to the mix of available materials. The adaptations of suburban resources could be shared with other urban youth ministries as well as documenting best practices. Organizations like UYWI have harvested veteran and newer voices that specialize in urban ministry. UYWI founder Larry Acosta has stood the test of time resourcing urban youth leaders and workers. Other organizations seek to address the need for urban resources such as Youth Specialties and Orange, gathering leaders that specialize in urban youth ministry.

Urban youth ministry must function as a well-connected machine, serving families in its system. Children's ministry, junior high, high school and college campus ministries working in tandem will support youth during every phase of their development. After youth have successfully walked through each stage, the reward for completion is the successful navigation of the next phase. For example, high school students and their families preparing for college, should be connected to campus ministries. Upon reaching the college campus the student would have a safe place to continue their spiritual formation as a young adult. Urban youth ministries are not as well connected to campus ministries. Often urban students head off to college without any connections to their new home for the next four years. Campus ministries such as InterVarsity Christian Fellowship could serve as a guide along the side of students while they are in school. Upon graduation the students who have grown up in many aspects can be returned to local churches for ministry. Strategic partnership with campus ministries can increase the leadership pools urban churches need. Youth leaders and senior pastors

in the urban environment can provide support to campus-based leaders, forming an urban church network of support.

The Family Connection: It's a Family Affair

Urban youth ministry models must address all aspects of youth development in connection with the family. Webster defines the word connection as something that joins two or more things.⁵¹ Reggie Joiner from the ReThink Group says that the church and the family are two influential systems that when joined together make an even greater impact.⁵² When these two systems work in tandem the potential to accomplish the same mission increases. The parent still possesses the greatest influence on a child, whether positively or negatively. The church has the potential to influence the parent. Even the academic field recognizes the importance of parents partnering with the school to maintain academic excellence. Researchers found that the home environment was critical in helping high-performing individuals to achieve excellence. These families shared a number of characteristics:⁵³

- They were hard working.
- They believed in doing one's best, whatever the task.
- They believed that everyone including the children should use time productively and should set goals.
- They emphasized self-discipline.

Family connection is what the urban environment needs in urban church-based youth ministry. The silo approach is no longer effective. The urban family needs connection to

⁵¹ Webster's New World College Dictionary, Fourth Edition. Sub verbo, "connection," 2000.

⁵² Reggie Joiner, *Orange Essentials: Five Priorities For Building Faith In The Next Generation* (Cumming, GA: ReThink Group, Inc.), 7.

⁵³ *Parenting Skills: Bringing Out the Best in Your Child*. Association of School Administrators, (Arlington, VA, 1989), 14,15.

the church and other supportive systems. The youth leader can be the facilitator of these connections.

There are ministries targeting the family in the youth ministry realm, each of them bringing specific strengths to the table. Some of these movements call for the abolishment of traditional youth ministry. They proclaim the family as the starting and ending point for spiritual development of its members. In the urban environment the family is too splintered and under resourced. If the urban family left to its own self-preservation it may not survive. Urban churches that lack adequate resources, have untrained staff and youth ministries with no clear youth development plan are threats to urban families. The family connection part of urban youth ministry would allow multiple levels of ministry to occur at the same time. Each local urban church should design a strategy that combines family with the faith community in order to demonstrate the message of God's story to influence the next generation.⁵⁴

Urban systems

Urban environments are full of living systems that are relational in nature verses linear. A living system is a self-organized, highly complex, and highly interrelated collection of living parts that work together to accomplish a high level goal when in proper relationship to each other.⁵⁵ Douglas and Judy Hall in *The Cat and the Toaster* use the analogy of a cat to represent the highly complex living creations that God makes

⁵⁴ Reggie Joiner, *Orange Essentials: Five Priorities For Building Faith In The Next Generation* (Cumming, GA: ReThink Group, Inc.), 12, 13.

⁵⁵ Douglas A. Hall, Judy Hall, and Steve Daman. *The Cat and the Toaster: Living System Ministry in a Technological Age* (Eugene, OR, Wipf & Stock, 2010), 59.

verses the toaster, a simply constructed man made item.⁵⁶ Doing ministry in an urban environment is living system ministry, participating with God as his life flows through his living systems. The city is a place where God has chosen to work despite the complexities of the environment.

The urban systems that surround the family are complex and interrelated on many levels. Some are living like the cat and others are man-made like the toaster. Family systems therapy understands that the family is an interactional unity and a change in one member affects all members.⁵⁷ This systemic perspective helps a therapist provide the appropriate support to family members. This approach is applicable to urban systems: change in one, affects the other. Urban living systems are different from suburban systems because of the amount of systems in play at one time. The pace and depth of each moving part adds another dimension to urban ministry.

The living parts or systems in urban environments include the family, health, education, justice, poverty, trauma, faith, court and penal institutions, civic duty and the multi-faceted cultural component. These systems in the urban environment surrounding youth connect with each other, some by choice and others by force. Youth workers should be able to identify these systems and connect with them for strategic ministry to youth and their families. Friedman says the progression of family therapy has brought a second revolution of thought to the table, the concept of systems thinking. This is the response of the human mind to the challenge of the information explosion that has been steadily expanding during the past half a century.⁵⁸ Underestimating or neglecting

⁵⁶ Douglas and Judy Hall. *The Cat and the Toaster*, xxiv.

⁵⁷ Edwin Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 13.

⁵⁸ Edwin Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 14.

information from any of these parts causes the youth leader to see through a glass darkly. Friedman introduces the family therapy model as a way of training clergy to minister in a systematic method. Understanding urban and family systems are essential keys to ministry in an urban context.

Friedman states that there are multiple underlying systems that make up the overall system. Understanding family process collectively and individually provides a way for deciding what information is important. On an individual level per *Hardwired* the brain in the human child is “hardwired to connect” to other people, for moral meaning and openness to the transcendent.⁵⁹ Churches can become a facilitator of authoritative communities for youth and families. Renewing and rebuilding authoritative communities is the key to improving the lives of U.S. youth.

Authoritative is a Latin word, ‘auctor’, meaning one who creates. Generally we see this word in a negative light, one of control. It’s time to reclaim and reuse this word. Authoritative communities don’t just happen; they are created and sustained by dedicated individuals with a shared vision of building a good life for the next generation.⁶⁰ God, the ultimate creator, by creating us in his image has empowered his people to create. Throughout the Psalms as the generations are mentioned they are instructed to care and groom the following generation. God reminds His people about His works in previous generations and is intentional about building them for his honor and glory. The New Testament church was generational with the older ones teaching the younger ones as in Titus 2:1-8.

⁵⁹ The Commission on Children at Risk, *Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities*, 6.

⁶⁰ The Commission on Children at Risk, *Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities*, 35.

Youth ministry in the urban environment demands an understanding of the complex systems surrounding the urban family and urban church. Training youth leaders about the urban systems affecting youth will empower the church. The Halls in the *Cat and the Toaster* present a biblical narrative of urban systems and a challenge to urban ministries to think systemically about how to navigate and connect in their communities. Urban church based youth leaders can benefit from these principles and develop relevant ministries to youth and their families.

The Halls introduce a different way of thinking about formal and informal learning through primary and secondary cultural lenses. They contend that primary culture consists of known relationships verses secondary culture that consists of official roles and structured ways of doing things.⁶¹ Most families function out of the primary space where the spiritual and relational culture drives family members to support each other in an organic nature. The secondary culture of formalized methods of support has a place but it cannot replace the connection gained through relationship. Churches fair well in developing and nurturing relationships on all levels. The youth leader serving as a facilitator for youth and families can assist them in developing skills for communicating.

Friedman argues that although most families function on a primary cultural level, they don't do it very well. There are multiple factors that come into play in family relationships such as birth order, family secrets and other external factors. Youth leaders and clergy must be trained to recognize these factors in order to serve the families in their communities. Each family may have a different factor that sets it apart from another family in the same community. Church leaders need to be able to make the correct

⁶¹ Douglas and Judy Hall. *The Cat and the Toaster*, 25.

assessment in order to adequately support each family. Awareness of the symptoms and cycles of family dynamics greatly increases the successful development of youth and their families.

There are three types of urban ministry workers as identified by the Halls, technicians, systems actors and systems thinkers.⁶² All are ministry practitioners.

1. Technicians - These are people who are able to live and serve in a living system knowing the how to's of a system as well as the organic side.
2. Systems Actors – These are people who generally use the primary culture as a way to operate in family systems and naturally follow relational patterns.
3. Systems Thinkers – These are people who are able to do effective ministry and able to reflect about what was learned for posterity.

Each level adds a different aspect of how relationships are processed in community and in families. Most urban ministry practitioners are either technicians or systems actors. It takes a lot of intentional effort to become a systems thinker. This requires urban ministry leaders and workers to take time to think back to what happened and why. The work and effort to process ministry as well as record the steps takes time. Youth leaders who can recount and track their efforts with urban families will assist in the holistic development of those families. Methodologies that are proven from the urban environment could be recorded and published for the benefit of other urban ministries.

Friedman identifies similar roles within the family unit, noting that the family process becomes like a movie unfolding before the clergy.⁶³ With each family member added to the mix, the dynamics change. As the roles become defined the clergy are able to understand the complexities of the family. This leads to greater understanding of each

⁶² Douglas and Judy Hall. *The Cat and the Toaster*, 226-231.

⁶³ Edwin Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, x.

individual regarding the role they play, adding to its dysfunction or overall health. Families who are open to identifying the dynamics are able to address the multiple systems in play in their household. Knowledge of the systems, the roles each individual plays and access to clergy and youth leaders serving as facilitators places urban families on the road to recovery. This is a complex and timely process that can bring restoration to urban families.

Data from Surveys of Urban Youth Leaders

Urban youth ministry leadership training organizations are limited in number in the United States. The leading urban youth ministry training venues are the DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative (DVULI) and the Urban Youth Workers Institute (UWYI). DVULI began as the result of the findings from focus groups with American urban youth leaders. DVULI is the longest running, inter-faith, urban youth leadership program in the nation.⁶⁴ The goal of DVULI is to train youth leaders to have a positive impact in the lives of youth.

An evaluation conducted in 2007 measured the effectiveness of the training in the lives of urban youth leaders. The growth and change over time in the passion, skills, personal and spiritual disciplines of youth leaders in the United States were documented. Focus groups and case study interviews were conducted in nine cities around the nation.⁶⁵ The surveyed youth leaders and workers of the DVULI will be referred to as graduates.

The Urban Youth Workers Institute (UYWI), of Los Angeles, California, was

⁶⁴ Curtis VanderWaal, *The DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative: Achieving the Dream*, (Berrien Springs, MI, August 27, 2007), 1.

⁶⁵ Curtis VanderWaal, *The DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative: Achieving the Dream*, 1.

started because of a need to train Latino youth workers. Currently UYWI is a national non-profit organization that trains & resources urban youth workers from all ethnicities to effectively evangelize and disciple youth in at-risk zip codes throughout America. UYWI hosts an annual conference, offers multiple online resources, coaching and leadership development opportunities and regionally hosted conferences. The data in these two reports point to a clear need for the training of urban leaders. The results of youth leaders and workers who have been adequately trained to reach urban youth and families are also displayed. The UYWI youth leaders and workers will be referred to as participants.

The respondents of the DVULI report ranged in age from 23 to 68, with an average age of 42 years. The majority, 60.2% were between the ages of 36-50 highlighting the findings from an article about the graying of American youth leaders.⁶⁶ Pastors are seeking youth leaders who are older, a little more settled and understanding of the family, church systems and life cycles. There are younger staff members on their teams but there is a trend to hire or place in the leadership role someone over 30 years old. The next age group, 23.3% were between the ages of 23-35 and the remaining 16.5% between the ages of 51-68.

The ethnic make-up of those surveyed is as follows, all self classified:⁶⁷

○ Black/African American	51.5%
○ White/Caucasian	23.5%
○ Latino/Hispanic	19.9%
○ Multi-racial	2.6%
○ Asian/Pacific Island	1.5%
○ Native American	0.4%
○ Other	1.1%
○ No answer	1.1%

⁶⁶ Curtis VanderWaal, *The DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative: Achieving the Dream*, 2.

⁶⁷ Curtis VanderWaal, *The DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative: Achieving the Dream*, 1.

Urban areas in the United States are very ethnically diverse. Some cities around country, although gentrified still serve as hosts to many economically challenged youth and families. Many of these families tend to be people of color primarily of Black/African American and Hispanic decent. DVULI recognized this and saw the need to empower youth leaders directly from those ethnic communities.

UYWI's report shows a similar response regarding the ethnic make up of the youth leaders and workers influenced by their trainings. African Americans ranked the highest at 35.5% of indigenous leaders and workers, Hispanic/Latino next at 30%, White 20%, Asian 6.4%, Pacific Islander 4.5%, Native American 1.8%, and mixed race at 1.8%.⁶⁸ Most of the respondents participated in a regional or national training event sponsored by UYWI. There were nine key indicators that measured the level of influence of the trainings for youth leaders and workers including youth culture, peer support, and personal development. Youth leaders were also asked about youth empowerment and leadership development. The lengths of involvement, roles in ministry, as well as context of ministry and gender were significant indicators of UYWI's influence on growth in many areas.⁶⁹

The highest level of influence on the youth leaders and workers was in the area of youth culture, with 54.2% being highly influenced.⁷⁰ Questions about their current and prior understanding of youth culture were asked along with the effect of UYWI's involvement with that understanding. Information ranging from identifying resources to help with youth culture, gang knowledge, youth slang and how to incorporate hip hop

⁶⁸ 2008 UYWI Workers and Leaders National Survey, (Akron, OH: The Center for Marketing and Opinion Research, LLC, 2008), 88.

⁶⁹ 2008 UYWI Workers and Leaders National Survey, 4.

⁷⁰ 2008 UYWI Workers and Leaders National Survey, 4.

was learned through the trainings. Youth leaders and workers saw significant change in how they understood and addressed youth culture as a result of UYWI's influence. Age was a factor in the youth culture responses with most of the increase coming from leaders and workers over thirty-five years old.⁷¹ The growth in knowledge of youth culture due to UYWI averaged 64.7% with the greatest specific growth coming from the area of knowledge about youth culture, 82.4%.⁷²

The length of involvement and number of times involved in training with UYWI proved a direct correlation to the increased level of knowledge in several areas. Most of the youth leaders and workers, 45.7% first connected with UYWI through a one-day regional training event.⁷³ The number of repeat attendees drops to 20.3%. The age of the participants made a difference with those under twenty-four attending significantly fewer training events than their counterparts.⁷⁴ The length of involvement dictated the repeat training attendance with 88.9% of those involved for three or more years for a one-day training, with 13.2% going to four or more trainings.⁷⁵ Proving to be a significant factor with the UYWI evaluation, length of involvement showed the importance of consistent training in the life of urban youth leaders and workers.

A report from the Search Institute regarding *The Attitudes and Needs of Religious Youth Workers: Perspectives from the Field* by Peter Scales confirms the positive effects of a resource dissemination, training and networking effort for religious youth workers. Training on the building of youth assets empowers urban diverse congregations and

⁷¹ 2008 UYWI Workers and Leaders National Survey, 35.

⁷² 2008 UYWI Workers and Leaders National Survey, 38.

⁷³ 2008 UYWI Workers and Leaders National Survey, 29.

⁷⁴ 2008 UYWI Workers and Leaders National Survey, 30.

⁷⁵ 2008 UYWI Workers and Leaders National Survey, 30.

communities to have an impact on at-risk youth. Youth leaders and workers from African American and non-white congregations with low-income families would benefit greatly from training. Approximately 30-40% state that the asset-based approach to urban youth ministry would help them attract youth who are disconnected to local congregations.⁷⁶ Youth leaders and workers would get the training needed in the identified areas they are underachieving. The training of youth leaders and workers is likely to keep youth more involved in the church.

The goals of the DVULI training were slightly different than UYWI. The graduates identified personal goals, particularly how to stay in ministry by reducing burnout. DVULI attempted to improve the graduates' self-care in relation to their physical, family, mental, intellectual, social, spiritual needs and community involvement.⁷⁷ This holistic approach to the development of the youth leader first has a lasting effect on the youth ministry itself, modeling a healthy life for the youth and parents served. Turnover rates were reduced with the involvement in ministry and attitudes about ministry were affected by the training. Graduates have sharpened the skills needed to increase their ministry scope and scale. The competence and self-confidence of the youth leaders increased in the lives of 64.7% of the respondents.⁷⁸

Other benefits of the DVULI training include organizational goals of youth leaders working collaboratively with others in the community, increased investing in other leaders, and graduates made a community impact through local projects. Graduates were encouraged to reach beyond the DVULI network to their local faith communities by

⁷⁶ Peter Scales, *The Attitudes and Needs of Religious Youth Workers: Perspectives from the Field*, (Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, November 1995), 6.

⁷⁷ Curtis VanderWaal, *The DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative: Achieving the Dream*, 3.

⁷⁸ Curtis VanderWaal, *The DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative: Achieving the Dream*, 3.

training others in the skills and values learned. There was an average of 3.7 programs per graduate that touched their communities.⁷⁹ Graduates were also able to translate their training benefit into financial benefits. An average of \$50,00 was raised per person with typical grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$100,000. Although a large number of graduates did not bring any money, 40.5% a good amount of graduates, 47.2% brought in one to five grants.⁸⁰

The UYWI report ranks other benefits of their training in the areas of personal development second and peer support ranked third amongst the highly influenced categories. The numbers were consistent with youth workers and the youth leaders. Personal development included balance with ministry and other commitments, healthy habits and fewer felt close to burn out. Past personal development was rated 53.1% while post training this number jumped to 68.1%.⁸¹ This includes increased personal time with God as well as taking a Sabbath day each week. Mentoring and coaching also had a significant impact on reducing burnout in its participants.

Youth empowerment focused on a philosophy of learning by doing as well as youth involvement with their ministry was measured. Prior to UYWI youth leaders were minimally focusing on empowering youth for leadership positions. Older youth did some mentoring of younger youth however youth did not speak to the program design or implementation. Post UYWI participants were intentional about having older students mentor younger students and listening to their voice throughout the planning and implementation stages. There was a positive influence from UYWI in the lives of the youth leaders and workers. A response given to the importance of incorporating

⁷⁹ Curtis VanderWaal, *The DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative: Achieving the Dream*, 13.

⁸⁰ Curtis VanderWaal, *The DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative: Achieving the Dream*, 14.

⁸¹ *2008 UYWI Workers and Leaders National Survey*, 50, 51.

leadership skills with youth of absolutely essential occurred 71.5% of the time from participants. This represents a major shift in thinking and practice for urban youth leaders and workers.

Both DVULI and UYWI make bold claims about the importance and results from attending their trainings. Both initiatives have the statistics to back up their claims. Training urban youth leaders and workers is a worthwhile investment and necessary for the betterment of urban youth and families. I support both of these initiatives as a graduate of DVULI, and a participant and trainer for the one day UYWI trainings and national conference. When training resources are poured into the lives of urban youth leaders and workers, grand results happen.

Most of the youth workers in urban settings are volunteers, even the lead youth leader. This can present certain challenges for attending trainings such as time away from work and the overall costs to attend the professional youth ministry venues. Organizations like Youth Specialties and Orange have supported the training of urban youth leaders by making their conferences affordable through scholarships. In spite of the challenges urban youth leaders and workers must be trained.

Churches can and must ensure training for the personal and professional development of its youth leaders and workers. Pastors and church leaders who support training preserve the families of their congregations and community by providing an informed facilitator of family development. As urban churches position themselves to be the clearinghouse and connectors of the support systems for families, healthier communities can be developed. Neighborhoods can be filled with families choosing not

only to live together but also to do life together in community responsible for developing the next generation.

CHAPTER 4

FIELD TESTING OF HOLISTIC URBAN YOUTH MINISTRY

An Introduction to the Field Test

I chose the context of the local urban church because I am most familiar with that setting. Much of what I have learned and experienced working for the past thirty years with urban families validates the need for holistic ministry. Urban youth and families are multi-ethnic with varied economic backgrounds and require engagement on all levels of life. Harold Dean Trulear in *City Lights* underscores the role of faith in the urban context as enabling youth leaders to do the difficult work of ministry to underserved youth.¹ Youth leaders are poised to support and build youth and their families through the local urban church.

This thesis-project is a field test of the crisis and need for training urban youth leaders to provide holistic ministry to urban youth and their families. The field in this thesis-project consisted of two sets of research. First, I examined youth leaders from urban environments in Cambridge, Massachusetts through focus groups from my local church; hereafter described as the case church and a comparison sister church's youth ministry staff. Two additional focus groups were held at a national youth leaders' conference. Second, interviews from my family of origin as the youth leader, and two sample families of origin from my local church. The data received from this sampling will point towards the case for holistic urban youth ministry.

¹ Harold Dean Trulear, "A Philosophy of Urban Youth Ministry," in *City Lights: Ministry Essentials for Reaching Urban Youth*, ed. Scott Larson and Karen Free, editors (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2003), 21.

Two urban families from my local congregation were highlighted from the focus groups: a two-parent home and a single mother with three sons as well as my family of origin. Each family practiced a form of Shema facilitated and supported by a youth leader. All of these urban families demonstrate that Shema is possible in urban environments under very complex circumstances. The families were ministered to as a unit and not just the young person. When we began to experience individual families abiding by these principles, a community of like-minded parents was created and youth leaders became facilitators of Shema for families.

The local church in my project uncovered five types of families practicing Shema:

1. Strong Christian families in the church – Two parent, single parent and blended family households with a clearly stated commitment to Christ. Parents are faithful to service and lifestyle inside and outside of the church service.
2. Weaker intact Christian families in the church – Two parent, single parent and blended family households with varied commitment levels to Christ. They are willing to serve but prefer limits to their spiritual commitment. Lifestyle inside and outside of the church service is disconnected from their faith and not always consistent.
3. Weak Christians with fractured families in church – Divorced, separated, co-parenting households with minimal parental contact. In some cases one or both parents are incarcerated or struggling with abuse issues (substance et al). Some families are court involved and have additional social service supports in place. Parents do not live together and claim a minimal relationship with God and the church.
4. Non-Christian families in the church - Sporadic parental church attendance, no agreement to live by biblical principles themselves yet see the value of their children attending church. Households may consist of two parents, single parent, or blended families. These unchurched families identify the local church as their church home.
5. All kinds of families in our surrounding neighborhood – The case church is located in an ethnically diverse neighborhood.² The ethnic make up of the community physically surrounding the church is Caribbean with a large Haitian population, Ethiopian with Orthodox religious beliefs, European, African-

² US Census Bureau, Community Development Department, *City of Cambridge Families*, 2011, Cambridge, MA, accessed April 15, 2015, <http://www.cambridgema.gov/CDD/factsandmaps/demographicfaq.aspx-pt1.pdf>.

American, with Asian and Latino families bringing up the rear. The community families show an interest in church/community events such as the block party, summer outreaches and other community sponsored events. Faith is minimally discussed at these events. The focus of the church is on service and connection to the families of the neighborhood.

My Urban Youth Ministry Journey

My journey in youth ministry actually began when I was a teenager attending an urban church where my father was an associate pastor and my mother was a Sunday school teacher. Often I would assist with the vacation Bible school and attend class with her on vacation days, as she was a grade school teacher by profession. I was always fascinated with teaching and the development of the children around me. During my teenage years, my siblings and I were active in our church's youth department, choir, and Sunday school. The adults saw leadership potential in me and provided opportunities for me to lead my peers through various offices such as vice president of the choir and secretary of the youth department.

Most of the influential adults in my life were rooted in the local urban black church I attended. The senior pastors, youth leaders and Sunday school teachers took an interest in my development naturally, academically and spiritually beyond the scope of traditional youth ministry. When my parents were getting divorced, the pastor and leaders of the church surrounded my family by supporting each member, including my mother, with counseling, academic help, and even groceries. A community of church-based leaders demonstrated the love of God to our household and that of my peers in the church whose families were faced with other personal crises.

Most of these youth leaders were trained professionally in the field of education.

Many of them worked full time as teachers, administrators, social workers and principals in the Boston Public School System. The training they received, although not church-based, equipped them to holistically minister to youth and their families in the local church setting. The devotion to the families of the church by the church leaders left a positive impression on my heart and mind regarding the role of the church towards hurting families.

My profession of youth ministry has continued by serving in youth ministry at the Abundant Life Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts, for approximately 32 years. I started as a youth worker with my husband who was also a youth worker at the time. Traditional youth ministry was in full play with a weekly youth service on Wednesday nights lead by an older deacon. The youth read scripture, played the instruments and participated in an adult led Bible study. Most of the youth who attended were children of the members of the church with a few neighborhood youth sprinkled into the mix. One evening the deacon pulled my husband aside and gave his notice of departure from the youth ministries. My husband was knighted that evening and became the youth leader with little or no professional training.

After about a year of serving with my husband, he noted my passion for youth and suggested that I consider taking over for him as the youth leader. He was moved to the deaconate ministry, and I was elevated to the role of the youth leader. I sought out training in the city by asking the professional youth leaders of that day to mentor me. Females in professional youth ministry were rare, so I turned to my male counterparts for direction. They pointed me to several books and organizations such as Youth Specialties and the National Network of Youth Ministries through which I began to study and learn

more about the profession of youth ministry. Through their mentorship and training opportunities, I learned the ropes and was able to train other youth workers in our local assembly.

Throughout the years other youth ministry resources appeared on my radar as I attended conferences and learned from my suburban colleagues. The state of the urban family negated the implementation of the traditional youth ministry models and the arduous task of sifting through methods and curriculum began. The search for holistic, urban, church-based youth ministry material led me to several authors who understood the importance of faith, family, culture and community as key building blocks for urban youth ministry. Youth practitioners such as DeForest “Buster” Soaries of First Baptist Church, Somerset, New Jersey, Dean Borgman of Culture and Youth Studies and Harold Dean Trulear of Howard University repeatedly sounded the alarm for the urban church and family to work together. Later I discovered the Family-Based youth ministry created by Mark DeVries and the Orange strategy developed by Reggie Joiner. Both of these strategies have also influenced my thinking towards a holistic youth ministry.

Training Urban Youth Leaders and Workers for Holistic Youth Ministry

Many urban youth leaders have not been afforded the opportunities of professional training in youth ministry. The leading reasons noted by urban youth workers for the limited training consist of: finances, time commitment and lack of relevant training resources. Some of these leaders and workers see youth ministry as a stepping-stone to adult ministry, thus leading to high turnover rates of urban church youth ministry leadership teams. According to a survey of professional and volunteer religious

youth workers conducted in 1995 by the Search Institute: (a) only half or fewer get any kind of training in a given year; (b) the great majority of religious youth workers, about 75% are interested in receiving additional training and resources in order to effectively serve youth; (c) the suggested preference is for a one-day, inexpensive workshop.³

Urban youth workers find that several aspects of traditional youth ministries must be adapted or changed to be effective in the city.⁴ Initially most of my training opportunities were suburban in nature and did not take into account the complexities of an urban environment. I gleaned great information from national youth ministry trainings such as the National Network of Youth Ministries and Youth Specialties. Yet, often there was a translation process required upon return that delayed the immediate implementation of the curriculum to my local setting. Over time I learned to lessen the translation phase and quickly train other staff.

Due to the lack of financial resources in urban churches, youth workers and leaders generally are volunteers compared to their suburban counterparts who tend to be full-time, paid youth leaders. In suburban settings, youth leaders are professionally trained in seminaries or suburban colleges learning the playbook of traditional youth ministry. If placed in an urban setting, they find grave differences from the textbook theories taught in the classroom. The differential can be overwhelming and professionally trained suburban leaders may either leave the city environment or learn to adapt. In the mid to late 1980's, organizations such as Compassionworks, the DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative, and the Urban Youth Workers Institute (UYWI) took up the charge

³ Peter C. Scales, *The Attitudes and Needs of Religious Youth Workers: Perspectives from the Field* (Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 1995), 5.

⁴ Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, *Youth Ministry in City Churches: Proven Tips From Over 40 Youth Ministry Veterans* (Loveland, CO: Thom Schultz Publication, Inc., 1989), 112.

of specifically training urban youth workers in affordable settings.

Youth leaders in local urban churches are seeking after training in order to effectively minister to their communities. In the 2008 Urban Youth Workers Institute (UYWI) Workers and Leaders National Survey, outlined that the highest growth in leadership development skills as a result of participating in training by youth leaders was in the area of equipping and developing volunteers.⁵ The complexity of the urban environment, changes to the family structure and the antiquated methods of youth ministry require youth leaders to be trained. This continues to be an ongoing need of urban youth workers today. Local churches and denominations have increased support for the training of urban youth leaders but not at the rate of the suburban counterparts. Resources and adequate training models are needed for the development of urban youth leaders and workers.

Holistic Hypothesis Testing Design and Process

My hypothesis regarding the need for training of urban youth workers for the holistic development of youth and their families was tested through focus groups, interviews and a brief survey. The project selected to support this thesis consisted of focus groups with urban youth leaders, some of whom are parents. Urban youth leaders, parents and youth from various ministries were surveyed before and after the discussion regarding their knowledge of holistic ministry to youth and their families. Youth leaders were also tested in a conference setting and through two urban local church focus groups.

⁵ UYWI: 2008 *UYWI Workers and Leaders National Survey* (Akron, OH: The Center for Marketing and Opinion Research, LLC, 2008), 20.

They were randomly selected based on availability by the youth leader. The youth leader was notified and invited all of their youth workers to participate.

Most of the youth leaders are volunteer, non-paid staff and served at least two years in ministry. The parents had children who graduated from the case church's youth ministry no more than five years ago. The youth qualifications were students who graduated from the case church's youth ministry no more than five years ago. One of the local churches participating in the focus groups is my local church located in Cambridge, Massachusetts, hereafter described as the case church, whose youth ministry has practiced holistic urban youth ministry with a family connection for several years.

The data gathered speaks to the following areas: (a) a basic understanding of holistic urban youth ministry; (b) the need for additional training of urban youth workers to be able to provide holistic ministry to youth and their families; (c) the need to fortify family ministry in urban settings. The primary data was obtained through the examination of the youth ministry in the local church where I have served for the past thirty years.

Two families who have participated in the case church's youth ministry from elementary years through high school to the completion of college were interviewed, parents and youth. Both of these families partnered in holistic youth ministry at the church with the youth leader/workers. The findings from these interviews are included in the project, strengthening the argument for the need for holistic ministry to urban youth and their families. The research from this project is more directional in nature, making a specific determination about the equipping of urban youth leaders.

My choice of methodology was in the form of focus groups. My audience was primarily comprised of youth leaders from the urban setting. Questions in survey and

discussion form asked pre and post the discussion of urban scenarios required youth leaders to think about the holistic development of youth and their families. (Appendix E) To increase my external validity focus groups from a local urban church in Cambridge, Massachusetts and urban youth leaders attending two national Youth Specialties conferences were participants. The national conferences were held in San Diego, California and Nashville, Tennessee in October and November of 2013 respectively. The San Diego audience primarily consisted of youth leaders, full time male from suburban backgrounds. My official hand polling of the audience displayed a mix of approximately 75% of suburban youth leaders and an urban audience of 25%. The senior pastors who were in attendance were supervising full time youth pastors. The Nashville audience had a little more diversity than the San Diego audience with a mix of 60% suburban and 40% urban youth leaders. The suburban youth leaders in both cities were encountering urban families who have moved into the neighborhoods of their churches. I chose this form of research based on its communal nature in the local urban church.

In addition to the focus groups I conducted interviews with families from the case church. Seven families in total participated in the interview process. I further examined three families, one being my family of origin in accordance with Edwin Friedman's family theory process in *Generation to Generation*. Friedman believes that clergy need to be aware of their personal family's emotional process in order to adequately serve their congregations. Being in agreement with this principle information was gathered and analyzed. The two families examined consisted of one single female parent who raised three sons, all of which attended the case church's youth ministry on a regular basis. The

other family is a two-parent home with one child who regularly attended the case church's youth ministry.

Choosing the one group, before and after design I conducted training comprised of the following participants:

- Youth leaders who have served in an urban church youth ministry for at least two years.
- Parents of youth actively participating in an urban church youth ministry for at least 2 years (current and alumni). Some of the parents in the case church also served as youth leaders.

The two local church focus groups were homogenous in nature because they had knowledge of the youth ministry in that urban church. I hoped for the participation of the senior pastors but neither pastor was able to attend the focus groups. I chose to focus on youth leaders and workers for this evaluation. The focus groups included youth leaders, workers and parents. The goal was to obtain ten people from each group. Over the four settings there were eleven in the case church, four in the Cambridge urban church, thirteen in Nashville, and nine in San Diego totaling thirty-seven people for this sample.

The youth leader from each congregation of the focus groups was given the list of criteria for the participants. My selection process consisted of a brief questionnaire to determine the qualifications of the potential participant. Upon selection a pre-test was given to gather data regarding their current knowledge of holistic youth ministry in an urban environment. (Appendix E) The same questions with from the perspective of a change in their thinking was asked after the training to determine what knowledge the participants gained as a direct result of the training.

The training focused on scenarios of youth from the urban environment facing relevant issues. (Appendix F) Participants were invited to analyze and solve the scenarios

based on their present understanding of youth ministry. A training defining holistic urban youth ministry was presented after the pre survey and then the participants were invited to respond to the survey questions based on this new knowledge. Their responses were recorded prior to the training and after the training. The local church training sessions for youth leaders and parents consisted of this format. The conference setting focus groups consisted of training on the holistic youth ministry approach. The post focus group evaluation self noted the change in thinking.

Basic nominal and ordinal data such as years of urban ministry, degree of urban youth ministry involvement in a local church setting, and interval data on holistic urban youth ministry was collected in the form of a pre and a post-test. Four brief open-ended questions were used to gather additional narrative data. The end of the training used the focus group format to have participants discuss four scenarios of urban youth ministry applying the holistic framework to the solution. The scenario questions were asked in depth to uncover the complexity of youth ministry in the urban setting. The questions were pointed at the issues youths in urban churches address on a regular basis. Descriptors for focus group discussion scenarios consisted of the church and unchurched, absentee fathers and mothers, sexual issues, academic issues, single parent, two parent, male and female identity issues and the spiritually apathetic.

Participants in the local church focus groups were given a clear expectation of their time and compensation for participation. Each session lasted approximately one and a half hours. The commitment was made prior to the entire session. The questions focused on youth ministry and the families of the youth in attendance. The kinds of procedures involved were listed as well as the level of risk, mental or physical, for being

honest and open regarding youth ministry and the church. It was important for the integrity of the answers for participants to feel safe.

The incentive or compensation of a \$10.00 gift card or cash was offered at the completion of the session from Starbucks, Dunkin Donuts, Market Basket, or iTunes per attendee and a light supper was also offered. Confidentiality and anonymity issues were addressed to acknowledge the proper handling of the data. All taped sessions were done at the written consent of the participants.

The focus group data shows 53% of the participants were self-identified as a youth leader or worker. Parent participants were the next largest group at 46%. The remaining 1% self identified as youth leaders and young adults. Some of the parents also function as youth leaders, approximately 13% of the 46% surveyed. Of these youth leaders 40% have been in urban youth ministry for five to ten years. The next highest category amounted to 27% of those surveyed have been in youth ministry for over fifteen years. Three out of four of the youth workers in this category were from the case church. Leaders who have served between ten to fifteen years, three to five or newborn to two all were each approximately 8% each. These figures align with the national average age of youth leaders.

The next measurement was of the degree of youth ministry involvement in a local church setting on a weekly basis. The majority of youth leaders and workers, about 40% put in one to three hours per week. Four to eight hours a week ranked second with 20%. Some did not answer the question allotting for 13% and for those servicing nine to twelve hours a week 7%. These numbers align with the volunteer youth leader and worker

population in America. Urban church based youth workers tend to be volunteers with full-time jobs relegating limited hours to youth ministry.

When asked about the effectiveness of the local church's youth ministry 73% of the focus group believes they are effective. Additional comments include:

- Develop/mature youth in a well-rounded manner including developing faith
- Parents continue to see and use the youth ministry as a resource throughout the child's development
- Creates a wholesome atmosphere where youth are encouraged in every area of their lives (spiritual, physical, etc.)
- All of the above and gives people a safe space to discuss their faith, everyday life and any struggles they have/are encountering in those areas

Most of those surveyed, 93% believe a strong youth ministry will attract unchurched young people. All of the participants, 100% believe that a strong youth ministry will integrate young people into the life of a local church.

The definitions of holistic were varied. Most the definitions included a multi-faceted approach to youth ministry inclusive of instruction to the mind, soul and body to youth. Some the statements are as follows:

I would define "holistic urban youth ministry" as a ministry that works with urban youth in every area of their lives. It is a ministry that seeks honesty and true relationships with youth beyond their Sunday morning persona. It is a ministry that doesn't compromise the word but is rooted in love and understanding instead of judgment. It is a ministry that meets young people where they are and grows them into the men and women God has called them to be.

I understand holistic urban youth ministry as a group of young men and women (typically junior high and high school age) that meet and discuss the importance of God in their lives. This goes beyond meeting just once a week at church. This means investing personal time into the lives of the youth. Part of this also includes raising the parents in understanding ways in which to raise their children and ways that God desires the church to connect with the family unit.

A ministry, which encompasses, includes, and connects with the total individual, youth. A ministry that considers the participants' spiritual, emotional, physical and financial needs and that of the child/rens parents, parent or guardian.

I was pleasantly surprised by the definitions of holistic youth ministry in the pre surveys.

The youth leaders and workers were able to clearly explain their perceptions of ministry in this context. Most were able to identify a spiritual component to holistic education.

Through the focus group discussions I discovered that many of them had been exposed to the term because of an academic encounter but not from a youth ministry standpoint.

Although they understood the nature of holistic education and could define it on paper regarding what it should be in a ministry environment, they could not translate the definition to ministry action. The youth leaders and workers did not mention the multiple layers of systems surrounding youth and their families. During the scenario portion of the focus group most of the participants had difficulty applying holistic approaches to the suggested youth dilemmas.

Regarding the training aspect of the youth leaders and workers in the local churches surveyed 54% had not received any official training from their local church. Some have shadowed other youth leaders in their house of worship but lack written materials about how to minister to youth holistically or otherwise. This statistic is consistent with findings from the Search Institute that only about half of youth workers in faith-based settings receive training for the work they do.⁶

There was a noted air of frustration in the youth leaders and workers regarding the lack of training. They sincerely desire to be well equipped for this role but are unaware of the resources that exist in youth ministry development. They were not sure who was

⁶ Peter Scales et al., *The Attitudes and Needs of Religious Youth Workers*, (Minneapolis, MN: November 1995), 5, accessed January 1, 2014, <http://www.search-institute.org>.

responsible for their training outside of the local church environment but clearly laid the responsibility inside the church on the senior pastor and church leadership.

A third, 33% of the youth leaders and workers surveyed had received training in their local church setting, some of it was youth ministry related but mostly training in the form of leadership development. This group took advantage of every training offered by the church and applied it to their work with youth. Some of the case church parents saw training as an opportunity to broaden their leadership skills at work, church and at home. They applied the teachings learned to multiple environments and viewed that process as their own holistic development.

The participants were asked to be specific about what types of training they would appreciate more of and 53% responded with how to teach the Bible. During the discussion portion of the survey many of the youth leaders felt ill equipped to teach the bible to youth in relevant ways. This is an ongoing training desire. The next request was for training on how to connect with older, active youth in the church. They wanted to continue the relationship after youth ministry was completed in their lives. There was an interest in the ongoing spiritual development of the youth in their care beyond youth ministry.

Training on how to build relationships with youth was also requested. A parent requested training on discipline that includes the family as well as how to bring families into the process of discipling their kids and spiritually supporting them. This need was evident during the discussion portion of the survey. Parents felt unqualified to develop their children spiritually, thus the reliance on the church-based youth leader and workers.

The youth leaders and parents were in agreement with a training that equipped parents to function as the spiritual lead in their homes.

Additional requested training topics include:

- Relationship building skills
- How to get parents to volunteer
- How might youth ministries be better supported to accommodate the urban lifestyle
- Examination of “black church traditions”
- Fresh ideas for youth ministry approaches
- Sharing of best practices and ideas from other youth ministries in the area
- Leadership exchanges to learn how to interact with other leaders, hear their perspectives and see some new faces from time to time

There was agreement with the youth leaders and workers on the area of the church’s ability to attract unchurched young people. The pre test showed that 93% believe a strong youth ministry will reach non-Christian youth. The discussion part of the survey revealed this attitude to be tied to the outreach component of urban youth ministry. Youth social outings, game nights and other lower level ministry touches were inviting and friendly to non-Christians, opening the door to new youth to attend a judgment free zone event. Youth leaders and workers expressed the need for more intentional planning to bring this to pass.

The pre surveys were confirming in some areas and surprising in other areas. The lack of field training in youth development and youth ministry surfaced as a confirmed need. Most of the participants became involved in youth ministry because of a heart for youth yet they are grossly undertrained and under resourced. Although the youth ministry resources have increased over the years it became clear that many did not have access to these resources. Without a clearinghouse of youth ministry information for urban youth leaders many remain untrained. The younger youth leaders were open to training that was

urban focused and that would equip them for youth ministry long term. The older youth leaders were open to learning new ways of reaching youth, providing they received adequate time to make the necessary adjustments.

Another surprise arose during the focus group discussion session. There was a lack of awareness of current youth culture and its effect on youth being able to maintain their faith. Only 5% of the youth leaders surveyed in the local church settings were aware of the research conducted by Christian Smith on the spiritual attitudes of youth in America. Although this data only included a small spectrum of urban families and families of color, the data speaks across ethnic lines.

The post survey results yielded changes in their thinking about the effectiveness of the local church youth ministry. The noted changes stated in order of importance are:

1. The desire to build stronger families for more effectiveness.
2. The acute awareness of the poor to no training received for holistic youth ministry.
3. The need to help youth learn and gain valuable life skills that incorporates Christian values.
4. The need to build Christian relationships with youth in the church.

Over half of those surveyed remained consistent regarding the amount of factors that determine effectiveness in their local church setting. The 10% of participants who did not rate the effectiveness of their local church's youth ministry in the pre test chose to rate the effectiveness of their church in the post test averaging two out of four factors.

Some of the more significant changes occurred in the understanding of the holistic urban youth ministry and how it is applied in the church based urban youth ministry. The shifts in thinking are as follows:

- I still believe it (the church's youth ministry) has to tackle all aspects of the youth's life. I now believe that the holistic approach needs to come from everyone involved with the child including the leaders, parents and other members.

- We need to minister to the whole person, spirit, mind, emotions and body. The church should be using modern techniques to engage youth in learning and understanding Christian values and positive ways to deal with unforeseen urban challenges.
- I think “financially” – financial need should be added to the “whole potential” picture. I mean in the sense of referring them if resources are needed i.e. access to food bank, medical access, scholarship, etc.
- Holistic urban youth ministry caters to the modern needs (physically, emotionally, educationally, spiritually, psychologically) in a way that will relate to their level.
- We should provide a service for families with youth people to develop them spiritually, emotionally, academically, physically, socially, monetarily along with God’s will and statutes.

During the discussion of the scenarios it was apparent when the light came on for the youth leaders and workers regarding the importance of family involvement. Many of the participants had a mental model of ministry directly to the young person void of their family or other systems connected to that youth. They lacked an understanding of the connection to the sustainability of the youth’s faith outside of the church. After examining youth from a holistic perspective an awareness of the work necessary to connect to their families also surfaced. While they wrestled to find immediate solutions to the scenarios the groups were encouraged to walk slowly to a holistic solution.

There were numerous suggestions given regarding the training needs of urban church based youth leaders. The greatest need highlighted the skills youth leaders need to have in their arsenal. Although there was agreement by the participants in this area it was unclear about what the delivery system looked like, especially since some of the leaders questioned their local church’s ability to equip youth leaders. Suggested skill sets for urban youth leaders from the focused groups are:

1. Ability to know, understand and recognize when an issue, circumstance, problem needs to be out sourced, kicked up or handed over/passed on to an expert.
2. Ability to engage and empower parents for youth development holistically
3. Ability to access resources for the youth and their families

4. Leadership development of staff and students
5. Relationship building
6. Counseling Basics
7. Mental Health Basics
8. Teen and human sexuality
9. Basic trauma skill set
10. Evaluation tools and processes for:
 - a. The youth leaders and workers
 - b. The youth ministry team as a whole
 - c. Their effectiveness in the local church

There was a common thread regarding the ability of the youth leader to build positive relationships between youth leaders and parents. Youth leaders and parents repeatedly voiced this concern during the scenario discussion and holistic definition training. There was a need for a better understanding of what role youth leaders play in the church and family mix. This became evident because in all of the scenarios the youth, parent and youth leader interfaced when a major life decision had to be made. Most of the youth leaders struggled with clear lines of distinction regarding the parent's responsibility. When the young person in the scenario sought the youth leader's counsel before the parent, the process of making a holistic decision for the participants became even more difficult.

Clear lines marking the roles of each party involved would alleviate the stress of the youth leader feeling like they have to solve every issue in a young person's life. It would also empower the youth leader to go directly to the family who has the responsibility for the youth's development. Often during the scenario discussion youth leaders had to be reminded that they were crossing parental boundaries when devising a solution for the young person in the scenario. The youth leaders discovered that many of the developmental needs of youth should be met in a family context. This was difficult for younger and non-parenting youth leaders to recognize. The needs of urban youth

seemed so urgent and unmet. Realization of this fact opened the way to functioning differently as a youth leader by building greater connections to the family.

The topics selected for the discussion were designed in collaboration with my mentor to cause youth leaders to address the relevant cultural issues youth are facing. Some of these issues like teen sexuality, same gender issues and youth violence have limited family and church connection and require the wisdom from people of faith, empowered by the spirit of God to address. The participants were encouraged by the project's willingness to tackle the taboo topics from a faith-based perspective. A youth leader noted that each question gathered the necessary parties at the table for a solution through the help of the youth leader. The youth leader's role was clearly defined as a facilitator of resources to support urban youth and families. This approach raised the awareness of assessing each scenario to see who needed for the sake of the young person involved. They suggested further documenting this process for posterity to assist other churches.

Church and Family of Origin Interviews

I examined three urban families in my local congregation, including my family of origin, a two-parent home and a single mother with three sons. Each family practiced a form of Shema facilitated and supported by a youth leader. All of these urban families demonstrate that Shema is possible in urban environments under very complex circumstances. The village concept of raising children in a communal environment is not foreign in the black church culture. Families often practice varied degrees of the village. According to Friedman in *Generations*, it was not difficult to carry this family structure

to the local church assembly where it was ‘understood’ by the majority of the congregation. Discipline and praise became the norm in the church community. Authoritative communities contain this family component and will become evident through the family examples listed in this paper.

My family of origin practiced the Shema very sparingly, generally on specific holidays that required a remembrance of God such as Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas (see Appendix G). My father was a senior pastor in a large African-American denomination and my mother was a public schoolteacher that served as a Sunday school teacher. I don’t remember any family devotions or seeing Christian literature posted around our house. The teachings of our mother were generally done through lecture format when we failed to uphold a house rule. Our father was not always present during meals and regulated the discipline of the children to my mother.

My father was raised in a southern state. As the youngest of sixteen children, he did not have much responsibility and was very close to his mother. Virginia, my namesake, loved her son and kept him by her side. My paternal grandfather was a part of World War I and was gassed during one of his assignments. When he returned home and discovered he had another son, he doubted that my father belonged to him legitimately. My father remembers being asked repeatedly by his father “are you sure that you are my son”? This shadow of doubt was cast upon my father and I believe it was the genesis of my father’s search for his identity.

My mother was of West Indian heritage, from the island of Barbados, also known as “Bajan”. Bajans are strong workers, full of faith in God and diligent to the study of His word. My grandparents raised my mother and her seven siblings in a God-fearing home

with strict rules and lots of discipline. She would often joke about not being able to do certain things because it was Sunday. She would reflect on spending all day with the Lord going from service to service, church to church, singing hymns and learning the principles of God. As the oldest female my mother had various responsibilities including looking after her siblings, who often wanted out of church. My mother felt pressured to get married, especially after her siblings were marrying before her because it was not good to be an old maid. She had dreams of traveling the world and becoming a dancer.

My parents union produced four children; myself, my twin sister, (we are five minutes apart), a younger sister who is eighteen months after us and a brother who is ten years after the twins. My mother was clearly the disciplinarian in our home with our father often doing his best to avoid any conflict with his relationship to the children. This rule did not apply to his relationship with our mother. It was commonplace to hear them arguing about various things during the evening and early morning hours. Our father would often leave the house and disappear for hours on end and return for another round of fighting.

My father was married to my mother by law but married to the church in his heart. This second union brought about more discussions in our household, with finances rounding the plate for second place of hot topics. Dad would spend countless hours preparing sermons, visiting the sick and tending to church business. When we would visit his church office there were 'do not touch' signs everywhere and we sat quietly as he performed his duties. Our perception of God at that time was that He could be seen but not touched or felt.

My family of origin fashioned me into a productive, strong and knowledgeable woman who is not afraid to step out on new ventures. This boldness was birthed out of a label given to me by my mother in my pre-teen years of being the black sheep of the family. My twin sister was tall and had long hair so she was the model, my younger sister has great vocal ability so she became the singer and I was a tomboy with no apparent talent so I was labeled as the different one. My father was in and out a lot so our relationship was minimal at best. None of us were daddy's little girls, never knowing the intimacy that comes from a father that cares and provides for you.

Our family style was autocratic – my mother made and enforced the rules daily by the letter of the law. What she said applied for her reason and you had an opinion only if she gave it to you. This comes from her strict Caribbean, Pentecostal parents and was well carried out with her children. We feared our mother and respected her at the same time. Years later we all are able to laugh and express gratitude for her hand upon our lives. She applied the Shema in her own way and raised four children in the fear of the Lord. Most of our official training came from the church Sunday school classes, sermons and vacation Bible schools but it was applied at home. If we strayed we were reminded of the fact that God is watching and that He doesn't like ugly. This built a godly fear within us.

One major incident occurred during my pre-teen years that became a rite of passage for me from childhood into adulthood. My parents were arguing, as usual but this time something was different. There was a new intensity to my father's tone that scared me. Normally I would wait in my room until the storm passed over but this time I snuck out and peeked into my parent's room to watch. Shortly after I captured a glimpse of my

mother I saw my dad swing his arm and knock my mother through a set of French doors into the living room. Glass shattered everywhere and my mother was lying in a pool of glass and blood. I looked at him and ran out the house down the street to the fire alarm. The operator asked “911, what is your emergency?” My reply was “my father just hit my mother and you need to come and get him.”

Back in the 1970’s domestic violence in the home was treated differently. The police would arrive and take the man out of the house for a walk and ask him a few questions. The woman was often left alone to collect herself. Afterwards the man was returned to the home and instructed to work things out in a reasonable fashion. The government, social service agencies and the church were void of understanding regarding how to support families of domestic violence. Today we have a myriad of agencies that are capable of under girding families in this dilemma. Statistically, one in every four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.⁷

The trauma experienced by myself and siblings extended far into our adult years. I did not realize that this shaped my thinking about God and his love for me as a father. Children who witness violence in the home between one’s parents or caretakers become the strongest risk factor of transmitting violent behavior from one generation to the next.⁸ There were issues of anger and mistrust generated in my siblings and I from watching this abuse and living in this environment. Ultimately my mother put my dad out of the house and re-created a new environment of peace for her children and herself. After fifteen years of marriage they divorced.

⁷ Tjaden, Patricia & Thoennes, Nancy. National Institute of Justice and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, “Extent, Nature and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey,” (2000).

⁸ National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, “Domestic Violence Facts,” [http://www.ncadv.org/files/DomesticViolenceFactSheet\(National\), 2006](http://www.ncadv.org/files/DomesticViolenceFactSheet(National), 2006).

Over the years as I have ministered to urban youth and families I have observed similar issues today as in my family of origin. Two of the families I interviewed for this thesis-project in my local church, A and B, and witnessed their Shema in our youth ministry.⁹ All interviews were confidential; the names of the interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement. Family A (Appendix G) consisted of a two-parent home where the dad grew up in a southern environment with a strong disciplinarian as a father. He readily admits to carrying this style of leadership over into his own home because it was all he knew and it worked. I have worked with this family for over ten years with the greatest connection occurring during the middle school years of their son. I conducted an initial home visit that turned into weekly Sunday deserts to review the son's status and provide support for raising an African-American male. My husband would also accompany me on these visits.

Dad of family A is the breadwinner in this household but he freely shares his wealth and knowledge with the family. He engages everyone with the finances, which helps to make them accountable for the financial outcomes of the household. Dad is in touch with his emotions and expresses them freely; good, bad, happy, and sad, there is space for everything. This is how he grew up with all of the members of his home because they were able to throw everything on the table. He finds this to be freeing and allows for truth to surface easier than if members of his house were afraid to share their emotions. Dad A takes seriously the charge by God to nurture his family and knows that someday God will judge him for this assignment he received. In dad A's family of origin you had your say but you had to earn your credibility. Family meetings were automatically held each Sunday and it could be about anything. Solutions were family-

⁹ Interview with urban family A, October 14, 2012.

based, all had an equal voice but mom and dad had the final say. Their philosophy was based on the more you act like an adult, the more responsibility you can handle, the more you earn, the more you were able to get.

Mom A did not grow up in a household where emotions were expressed freely. Her dad did not care about her opinion and family meetings were announcements. Dad of Mom A was southern and did not desire to hear a female's opinion. There were clear-cut, well-defined roles for the husband and wife. His philosophy was 'because I said so' and all persons living under his roof operated within those parameters. There was no we, no mom and dad; her opinion was his. Her mother was Latino and spoke limited English, even after raising nine children in America. She was a stay at home mom and provided the support to her children necessary for their growth and development.

Together they have created an environment where family members can express themselves by using any chosen art form. All seem to be happy that communication is verbal and creative. Letter writing, drawing a picture, flowers, stickers, notes, songs, cards, and home made baked goods are all ways they use to express themselves. For example mom loves to write and gave their son a journal when he was ten of her personal thoughts to him. Some of the topics included various congratulations when he completed a grade to where do we put a special uncle's death. Mom A wrote the son a letter when he turned thirteen and dad gave him a letter when he turned sixteen. It was their way of marking his rites of passage from one age to a landmark age.

When a serious problem or issue arises anyone can call a family meeting. Everybody has to attend and hear what the other person has to say. Generally they were centered on the parents call to deal with academic issues. There is an understanding that issues would

be dealt with, called on, and resolved as well as the emotions that go with those resolutions. The son A feels that his emotions are more of an opinion; they are listened to, he can speak freely and then feels he is shot down because he is a child. He is still learning over time that his parents are responsible for his total well being, naturally and spiritually.

I observed that family A is a very touchy, feely, group with common public displays of affection. During my time with them they often sat very close to one another and freely reached out to touch one another when making a point. They often affirmed each other verbally for a job well done. For Dad A and Mom A this is very different from their upbringing with both of their fathers having southern backgrounds. Neither of their fathers believed in a lot of physical contact.

Dad A is an intense man; he can go from 0 to 100 quickly. This can be perceived as loud and angry. He would tell you that he is passionate about things and not always angry; he just wants to get to the bottom of things. Mom A on the other hand is intentional and urgent. She will take her time to explain and express things yet leans towards her needing to know that she is getting her point across regarding the situation. She needs to be understood. She will speak to things when they get in the yellow zone hoping to avoid getting to dad's red zone. When Dad A got involved it was often too late.

Both parents A and B had dads in their home. Both of their dads set the boundaries in their homes growing up. Now Dad A sets the boundaries in this household. He has scriptures around the house, sets regular pray times and requires them to eat together, giving in to athletic and academic schedules as needed. It is easy to see the principles in the *Partnering with Parents in Youth Ministry* book being applied in this household. The

parents, particularly the father, have assumed the spiritual formation lead for himself first and then his household. Mom A is in full agreement thus bringing Proverbs 6:20-23 to fruition that the father lays down the commandment and the mother lays down the law. They are intentional about seeing the Shema in this household.

The contrast to the Shema in Family A is Family B (Appendix F) that consisted of a single Caribbean mother with three sons. All of the sons have different fathers who have not contacted them for years. When Mom B first connected to our church it was through the witness of her sister regarding our youth ministry activities. We had two church vans that would canvas the cities of Boston, Medford and Cambridge to pick up youth to attend our Friday night youth service as well as our Sunday school. The boys quickly gravitated to the men in the church and many served as uncles and big brothers to her sons. Their natural fathers continued to disappoint them week after week. One Father's day while the oldest son was reading a piece on fathers, he turned the Pastor and declared "you are now my father". The official adoption of this family began for our church.

After conducting a home visit to meet the mother, I quickly realized that help would be needed from some of the older women to graft this family into our church. The women's ministries headed the clarion call and began to invite her to events, prayer sessions and service, all with the hopes of building a network of support based on relationships. It took approximately two years before she began to respond consistently to the gestures of love from the women. We connected her with mothers whose children were close in age and with women who could relate to being Caribbean. She said we felt like family and began to bring others with her. Soon she opened her home to us and

allowed us to share in her community. Her dreams and visions of owning her own home were verbalized and we agreed to pray with her. Today she owns her own home.

During a presentation by Jawanza Kunjufu, a leading authority on black families he made the following statement: “Women love their sons and raise their daughters.” I have witnessed this in many black mothers especially since we want to protect and nurture our sons in their formative years. Mom B initially was not an exception to this rule. She was raised in a Caribbean home with a strong disciplinarian father. When they migrated to the United States she decided that when she had children they would be exposed to greater opportunities than previous generations. Her relationships later produced three sons, blessings to her heart and a responsibility to raise them in the fear of God as she was raised. Although she strayed from the faith for a season, she knew the value of believing in God and adopting His values for her life.

As her sons began to grow, each one captured an identity in the family pecking order. The oldest son, B1, became very paternal, often disciplining his siblings in place of his mother. He also became a husband like figure for her that was often displayed in their disagreements. Since he had taken on the father’s role in the discipline area, he assumed other liberties would accompany this role. Often Mom B would threaten to kick him out of the house but the youth leader would remind her that he is her son, not her husband. Son B1 became a committed Christian when he was in elementary school. He would fast and pray for long periods of time much like Samuel. His love for God and His word grew dramatically. My husband and I took him under our wing and supported his spiritual growth along with the work his mother was doing daily.

The middle son, B2, was an introverted geek who loved to play with computers. He was bigger than most of the youth and often was picked on because of his appearance. I connected him to the older geeks in the church who encouraged him to be comfortable in his own skin regardless of what others think or say. He was very angry about his father not being involved in his life and would take this out on his mother through fits of rage, sometimes resulting in him walking off for short periods of time. He resented his older brother for assuming the role of their father and tried to pick fights with him also. Son B1 was a prayer warrior and was able to calm his brother down and defuse the fight quickly.

The youngest son, B3 is the life of the party. He loves attention, is cute and loves to play. He looked for his father early on but since he could not be found he discovered his older brother was the next best thing. He modeled his life after him and built a close bond that still exists today. He also found other big brothers in the church who took him under their wing providing guidance as needed.

Although a father was not present in this home, Shema was accomplished through Mom B. She set a standard of family devotions, prayer and bible reading times, family meal times and family trips to keep the ways of God in front of her sons. She incorporated the assistance of the Pastor, Youth Pastor, youth leaders, and church members on many occasions. We have driven across town in the wee hours of the night to support her as she administered the necessary discipline in her sons' lives. While raising her sons Mom B decided to give back to other single moms. She supported many mothers by providing groceries, cooking meals, advising and even assisting with disciplining their children. She was instrumental in supporting many families in the church

and community, even two parent homes. She has grown as a parent, woman of faith and her sons have grown up to become mighty men of valor.

I agree with many of the principles in several of the books regarding the joint philosophies of family ministry coupled with youth ministry. My thirty years of ministry have proved that this combination works. Actually, I don't know any other way of doing ministry in an urban environment. We have to reach out to parents and partner with them for the wellbeing and spiritual formation of their children. It does take a village to raise a child. Our church was extremely instrumental in the success of many families because we rallied together to support parents and children. In our urban context support manifested differently depending on the needs of the family being serviced. For some families we have served as advocates in court environments, other families needed guidance on how to raise their children in the fear of God. The youth leaders in the case church, believing that holistic urban youth ministry is all encompassing, addressed financial resources, connections to jobs and even housing requests.

Family A firmly believes the church has been a good help for their family. They also feel that the school system is negligible and not living up to its potential to positively affect families. With the use of cell phones and computers as the only portals of media, limited, godless thinking is shaping our youth's worldview. Families must discuss what is going on in the world and be aware of the impact of social issues. We are all are a global citizen and must connect with the domestic and international affairs of our day. Family B shares that opinion and feels that the church could be doing more to facilitate these conversations with families.

Project Results

The holistic development training for urban youth leaders and workers was well received by the various research audiences. The training presentations in both cities were research full and visually good but the content was greater than the time allotted for presentation. My goal was to get the information out to receive feedback from the audience. The question and answer periods in both cities proved to be very fruitful. Audience members were able to select what information they wanted me to drill down in and apply to their specific situations. I enjoyed their questions and the process gave me the opportunity to discern the transferable data in my thesis-project. It was great to know that many of the principles are not just a theory but can be practiced in multiple environments.

After speaking with both training audiences I have concluded that:

1. Families across the board are facing crisis on all levels. This has led me to challenge the urban church to re-examine the support it is giving to families.
2. Youth leaders are uncertain about their role due to changes in the family structure and church demands.
3. Youth are engaged on many levels, socially, spiritually, academically, etc. and the church needs to connect to youth on these levels.
4. The need for the holistic development of youth and their families will require the church's ministries to function in collaboration internally.
5. Family-based youth ministry versus church-based youth ministry is no longer the argument.
 - a. How can church-based youth ministry connect with and support families is the new argument.
 - b. This requires a new skill set for the church-based youth leader.
6. The term community no longer applies to just the urban environment. All churches need to examine their communities in light of developing youth and their families for adequate resources inside and outside of their four walls.

Comments from the written evaluations included:

"This information is not limited to an urban audience. Suburban families need this information too! It was very applicable to my situation." San Diego

“Great speaker.” “Awesome.” “Enjoyed it a lot.” Nashville

I did not realize the depth of my youth ministry philosophy was founded on the compilation of the Shema, a holistic youth ministry mode. My family of origin, with all of its issues, created a spiritual legacy that included a love for God first, followed by a love for the work of God. Over the years I have learned that is paramount for everyone to have a relationship with God and the importance to train parents to teach this to their children. Biblically there is a community-wide responsibility for instruction that begins in the home. Each Christian home should be in agreement with the teachings of God and its application to daily living. The biblical community should be a reflection of what takes place daily at home thus producing a citywide venture of raising children in the fear of God.

The Shema is one of the foundational scriptures I base my theology of youth ministry upon because of the dual responsibility of the parents, supported by the church with city affirmation to instruct children in the ways of God. In my work with urban youth and their families it has been helpful to provide a pattern for families to assist in the spiritual development of youth. Many of the families my local church served via holistic youth ministry have grown and are now giving back to the church, and the body of Christ locally and nationally. The Shema is a very practical way for families to practice their faith. The discipline of the Jewish culture makes it possible for a daily review so there is a continual reminder of the way to live for parents and youth alike.

Biblically spiritual development begins in the family yet many parents are not equipped to teach their children for multiple reasons ranging from a lack of their personal

faith to knowing how to implement a plan. Even with the research weighing heavily on the side of parental impact, some choose to leave the spiritual development of their children solely to the church-based professionals. When parents are comfortable telling their spiritual narrative according to Kenda Creasy Dean in *Almost Christian*, youth receive an invitation to participate in a faith journey.¹⁰ Having an understanding of this mandate upon families by youth workers will provide a framework for ministering to youth and families in the urban context because the family and its surrounding systems become the foci not just the youth.

My youth ministry experience is rich with youth who grew to productive, healthy adults in part because my local church practiced Shema. Our church village formed an authoritative community including families of all kinds, single parents, married couples, and singles without children. College students were adopted into the village through the watch care ministry. Relationships were formed on multiple levels, crossing generational, gender, ethnic and economic lines. Adopted and blended families collaborated to make an urban church village. People wrestling with their sexual identity were embraced, not judged and allowed to work out their identity in Christ.

There is power in the collective community of Shema. If several homes in a community are practicing Shema in a particular neighborhood, possible systematic changes could occur in families. I believe we can begin with the families in our churches. Although many of our congregations are commuter churches we can spread Shema family by family. Biblically adults, specifically parents, are charged with the care and spiritual upbringing of youth and their families. In order to affect generations to come

¹⁰ Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church* (New York: Oxford, 2010), 112.

youth leaders must help families return to this mandate by equipping parents and helping them to effectively shepherd the spiritual development of their families. Urban churches have struggled to create a framework to train youth workers holistically. This research answers some of the questions pastors and youth workers have been grappling with over the years. Recent conversations with veteran youth workers celebrate my research and look forward to future written resources to be developed from this work for urban churches.

Youth leaders/workers from the sample focus groups and the surveys responded to the need for training to expand their capacity to serve urban youth holistically. Through the case studies presented in the focus groups youth leaders and workers displayed the following results.

- Youth leaders and workers were challenged to think critically about what skills and resources are needed.
- Senior pastors should be exposed to the knowledge of holistic urban ministry and require youth leaders and workers to attend additional training to strengthen their abilities.
- Churches should examine their youth ministries holistically.
- Youth leaders should create strategic changes to the delivery of ministry to youth and their families.
- Collaborations across denominations are needed within various urban neighborhoods to intentionally network the support systems for families.

Long term, I plan to offer training for urban church-based youth leaders and workers on how to structure their youth ministry to serve urban youth and their families in a holistic manner. Through written materials such as books and a blog, holistic urban youth ministry can be shared in a global context. Online venues can be used including podcasts, seminars and workshops to equip urban churches to serve the families in their congregations and communities. This material adds to the caravan of voices that are

called to serve the urban environment by ministering to the urban family, one household at a time.

CHAPTER 5

OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSIONS: URBAN YOUTH MINISTRY REDEFINED

The goal of this thesis was to prove the case for training urban youth leaders to holistically minister to youth and their families. This required a clear understanding of the term holistic and its application in the urban youth ministry environment. A revised definition of holistic urban youth ministry was provided. An updated role of the urban youth leader along with a basic plan for building or revising a local urban youth ministry was given for use by a senior pastor and youth leadership team. Through the examination of church-based youth workers in urban settings the research sought to unearth the necessary training needed for urban youth workers.

Youth workers from two local urban churches participated in focus groups and youth leaders serving urban youth were trained on holistic youth ministry. A case church was used as the base site for examination. Families from the case church congregation were interviewed to see how holistic urban youth ministry has taken place over the years. Parents of youth who have successfully completed the case church's youth ministry were invited to participate in the research. The case church displayed holistic ministry to youth and their families on several occasions utilizing a multitude of methods. Programs did not overshadow the need to reach the young person and their family. As a result the whole family was supported in most cases naturally first, opening the door to spiritual transformation.

Holistic family ministry occurred in the case intentionally and sometimes as an unintended consequence. When the youth leader was strategic about connecting with the

parents and all parties supporting the youth a comprehensive plan was established. Each party was clear about their role in the development of the youth, often sharing information to better the other areas. Some connections happened due to crisis but remained in place afterwards when the authoritative community was established. The process was documented for the next young person in a similar predicament. The formation of authoritative communities proved to be the additional support system urban families needed to grow and be successful.

Families began to share their process with others giving credence to the church being a viable mediator and assistant for family dilemmas. The benefits of participating in an authoritative community were evident through the testimonies of the participating families. The youth leader was expected by the other families in the congregation to become a fixture in assisting the realignment of their families by way of joining the community. Other youth workers in the case church began to observe holistic urban youth ministry and began to practice its components. The youth ministry reflected Friedman's family therapy approach to urban youth ministry through the network of families learning and growing together.

This research supports my hypothesis for the need for holistic training for urban youth leaders and workers. With more than half of the urban youth workers surveyed feeling not adequately trained to serve as youth leaders there is still a lot of work to do on the local church level. These statistics are in accordance with national studies such as the DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative (DVULI) and the Urban Youth Workers Institute (UYWI) yet the same issue remains: urban youth leaders are not being adequately trained for holistic urban youth ministry.

The local church leadership needs to take responsibility to make sure every area of the ministry leadership team has been properly trained. Senior pastors must take the lead and require all youth leaders and workers to be trained. Methodologies and best practices must be shared to lower the rates of untrained urban youth workers. Senior pastor advocates are needed to take the charge in this area. Churches with limited or no budgets can partner with other churches in their community for training.

To properly minister to urban youth today the youth leader must take a holistic approach to the family and youth. We can no longer isolate the young person and focus all of our attention on him or her, ignoring the parents, guardians and other siblings. The youth leader should know every system that touches that youth. Traditionally youth leaders are only aware of after school involvement, especially athletics. Social workers, probation officers, clinicians, school staff and faculty, family and individual counselors are involved in the lives of urban youth today. Youth workers cannot properly assess and support the youth's spiritual development without their input. To avoid this wealth of information is to create an imbalanced and poorly informed decision about the spiritual growth and development of our youth.

A holistic approach to urban youth ministry requires the formation of authoritative communities within local urban churches. Non-specialists such as family members, volunteers and citizen-leaders are the basic ethos of this community. This mode of operation allows for leadership by all, not just the youth ministry professionals. This method of authoritative communities is a mid-point between the two models of the family-based ministry and the professionally based youth ministry. In the urban

environment a compilation of both ideologies will provide structure to the holistic approach to youth ministry.

The proposal of youth leaders to become facilitators of youth and family development is a new twist on an old concept of the urban village. The urban youth leader becomes a facilitator of these communities providing Shema for families seeking direction and additional support. This is the beginning of the authoritative community for youth and families in our local churches. The youth leaders role changes from being an activities programmer to a facilitator of youth and family life. As a facilitator the youth leader helps the youth and family to operate effectively and easier by a) communicating with youth and their families, b) connecting with all of the systems surrounding youth and their family, and c) providing guidance and/or supervision for the spiritual development of the family.

This means urban youth leaders hold in tension the philosophy of family connection ministry with the practice of youth ministry with two things in mind, 1) the holistic development of the youth and the family members from a spiritual platform and, 2) bringing resources to bear to support the family in this process. This requires cooperation of the family, church and community to be successful. All programs and events should point to this goal. Planning and strategic alignment of ministry goals are needed and the results should be evaluated regularly. The methodology will differ based on context but the results should yield spiritually productive and healthy youth and families.

Research by the Baylor University School of Social Work shows the fruit that comes from religious communities taking the lead. The moral authority edge that the

community of faith brings allows for the changing of mindsets, hearts and attitudes about the people being served. Faith institutions offer a large network of care and protection of children. The role of the church is important for family and community development. The influence the church coupled with the focus on compassion and understanding gives space for its leaders to rally around the issues of the family.

The church as a community institution has the capacity and authority to raise awareness of the importance of keeping children in family care and promote family-based alternatives when biological families are not willing or able to provide care.¹ Faith institutions have played key roles in the lives of children throughout the years. Urban families rely on the church for resources especially in poor environments. Churches are able to set priorities for the community, often with leaders serving as first responders to crisis in the city. Generally church leaders have the trust of the community residents and heartbeat of their community. This position of being at the forefront places the responsibility for the welfare of families in the lap of pastors and youth leaders.

Historically youth ministry in the urban black church happens on a congregational level. Black churches developed youth ministries that offered young people spiritual and political engagement through gospel music and grass root organizing.² Generally freedom is the key word to describe the theology of the black youth ministry model. Youth are encouraged to live passionately in their communities that are full of challenges and obstacles, noting that Christ is able to deliver in the midst of it all. While urban youth leaders typically tend to be volunteers, many are parents themselves and understand the

¹ Stephen Hanmer, Aaron Greenberg and Ghazal Keshavarzian, *Religious Communities Take The Lead* (Kosei Publishing Company, April-June 2009), Dharma World Magazine, 5.

² Dave Wright, "A Brief History of Youth Ministry," *The Gospel Coalition Blog*, April 2, 2012, accessed March 17, 2014, <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2012/04/02/a-brief-history-of-youth-ministry/>.

role of the family in the church. Non-parenting youth leaders in the urban environment also value and model communal behavior.

The spiritual development of youth is still the biblical mandate of parents. In the past some youth leaders in local churches took the lead in this area leaving the parents as the secondary support. Over the years the responsibility began to shift back to parents who are finding themselves unclear about how to spiritually raise their children. We need to realign, change the direction of families, churches and youth ministries to a biblical view of youth development. As youth leaders are involved in more training programs around the country such as the DVULI and the UYWI, holistic services can be provided to urban youth and families. As noted in the DVULI report:

Greater investment in younger aged graduates will yield a greater return on the DeVos investment since they appear to experience larger improvements across a larger number of areas than older graduates. Any modifications in the Initiative's curriculum would more appropriately need to make changes based on age rather than number of years in ministry.

Such strong findings confirm the effectiveness of the DVULI curriculum in revitalizing middle ministry graduates, thereby lengthening their ministry careers by reducing burnout and increasing ministry effectiveness.³

The maximum benefit of training occurs with younger youth leaders however ministry effectiveness increases with any age with training.

I have learned several insights during this process of evaluating urban youth ministry that can lend to partnerships with existing youth ministry resources. There are excellent resources that could be used in urban environments with minimal adjustments for context such as the *Orange* strategy for churches and the *Sticky Faith* curriculum. My bent towards Orange verses other family context curriculums is the specificity of the developmental stages, simplicity of implantation, flexibility of family make-ups and

³ Curtis VanderWaal, *The DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative: Achieving the Dream*, Volume 1 & 2, 210.

allowance for the complex urban systems. The family has not become an idol but a vehicle through which whole communities can be restored. Orange allows each community to contextualize the curriculum understanding the importance of every member of the family, present or missing.

Sticky Faith as an additional support for families stirs the minds of parents to think about the spiritual development of their children in a non-judgmental fashion. Urban families endure additional pressures that can cause them to retreat from supporting the spiritual development of their children. *Sticky Faith* not only offers suggests for implantation but encourages parents to be pro-active in community with other parents. This resource can be tweaked for applicability to the urban context. Parents and youth leaders will find this curriculum useful for training and equipping families on their spiritual development journey as a family.

UYWI's website has a multitude of resources for urban ministries to access. Articles, blogs and podcasts from youth ministry experts are available in abundance. Knowledge how to access these resources for urban youth leaders is a barrier. Through the development of local networks of urban youth leaders key resources could be shared. Information from the Center for Youth Studies online also serves to assist youth leaders in research and practical tools for ministry. There are resources available for parents as well youth leaders. The Center for Parent and Youth Understanding serves as an excellent resource to study youth culture, train families and resource youth ministries.

Training on how to discover and utilize existing youth ministry resources would be beneficial to urban youth workers. During the holistic training many of the youth leaders were unaware of existing youth ministry resources or avoided them based on an

assumption of their lack of relevancy. When asked about some of the leading research in the realm of youth ministry many did not have an answer. The research by Christian Smith as recorded in *Soul Searching and Souls in Transition*, although mostly suburban based reflects the spiritual lives of urban youth. Some youth leaders did not want to do the work of translating the culture and walked away from valuable resources. Lack of time, finances and capacity were reasons given for not investing in additional tools for youth ministry.

It would have been interesting to receive more insights from local urban senior pastors. Most of the input I received from senior pastors was in the form of conversations regarding the status of their youth ministry. They understand the importance of ministry to youth and their families but not the resources it will take to build an effective urban youth ministry. Lasting changes in urban youth ministry will occur when the senior pastor is on board.

In most ethnic urban churches when the senior pastor champions a call for something the congregation rallies behind the pastor. Ministries and ideas come to fruition when the senior pastor blesses them with words. Resources follow. The case church pastor and the senior pastor of the local focus group were fully committed to the youth ministry. Both pastors have set aside funds in their budgets to support their youth leaders. Their congregations have also bought into the importance of youth ministry. Although there is still a need for a systematic training for the youth leaders of these congregations they are open to setting up a structure for ongoing training and development.

My recommendations are as follows:

- Connecting with senior pastors of urban churches for the planning of a holistic youth ministry. Senior pastors hold the keys for the successful development and the posterity of urban youth ministry. Without their support the youth leaders and workers will not get the necessary resources to minister to youth and their families. Focus groups redefining youth ministry for senior pastors would be helpful. As pastors understand the importance of building a comprehensive plan, the finances, space, staff, etc. will be made available.
- Connecting with existing youth ministry resources regionally and nationally. Urban youth leaders are extremely unaware of the resources at their disposal for youth ministry purposes. Exposure to these resources would change the way ministry is done in urban areas. The re-establishing of an urban youth leaders network would provide a venue for the gathering of information. An online resource to supply information of local urban and suburban training opportunities and to serve as a clearinghouse would be helpful. Organizations such as the Urban Youth Workers Institute and DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative provide training specifically for urban church-based youth leaders. Scholarships to youth ministry conferences such as Youth Specialties and Orange would assist urban youth workers in attending. Collaborative efforts of churches within urban neighborhoods could be encouraged.
- Provide ongoing training at various stages of the year. An annual calendar for the training of urban youth leaders and workers should be developed. It could rotate on a three-year cycle, allowing for new youth leaders and workers to participate. The foundations of youth ministry would be covered for the first time youth leader to the veterans. Practitioners from the urban environment could be brought in to connect the churches in the community to the community. Training of youth leaders and workers would then become a norm in the urban church. There are great tools such as *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful* by Gary A. Parrett and S. Steve Kang that stress educating the community of the urban church. This book provides a clear case for structuring the education process of the entire church.
- Provide urban written materials to youth leaders – Urban youth ministry materials are dated. More written information on urban youth ministry needs to be produced. As urban practitioners partner with other teams best practices can be recorded for posterity. There are successful models of urban youth ministry in play but they are not as well resourced as the suburban counterparts. As best practices are recorded by print, audio and video they can be shared and tweaked for maximum performance.
- Create local networks of urban churches – Urban communities are littered with multiple churches, some on the same block. Just as the disciples combined their nets to catch a large haul of fish, so must urban youth ministries. Partnered together, there could be a large impact on the neighborhoods in our cities. Paul Fleischmann, president emeritus of the National Network of Youth Ministry outlines a plan for networking in his book *Better Together: Discovering the Dynamic Results of Cooperation*. Following this guide can create local urban networks that can be connected nationally for a greater impact.

The research discovered through these findings calls for the urban church to get back to training its youth workers for holistic ministry to urban families. Holistic ministry to urban families occurs in fragmented forms in many genres but may not be led by the church. For some youth leaders ministry to the family has taken a back seat to programs in the urban church. The ongoing cry for youth leaders in the urban environment is for training to adequately minister to youth and their families. Churches can provide the training needed for youth and families. Although a model was not developed this case sets the stage for further research and development for holistic youth ministry in the urban area.

The results of my project can generate a plan for the ongoing training and development of youth leaders in the urban context. Urban youth leaders can be developed through self-directed learning such as networking and seminars.⁴ Published and printed materials, a working manual for urban youth ministries, series of workshops and seminars, and online materials and webinars can be created from this document to support such training efforts. The production of resources for the urban environment will successfully train church-based urban youth leaders, help them assess their youth ministries and make adjustments necessary to produce spiritually mature youth and families.

In the movie “Not Easily Broken” by Bishop TD Jakes, one of the last scenes is an interaction with a single father and a coach. The father tells the coach that he would like his son to be on his baseball team so the coach would help the child become a better man.

⁴ Mark Senter III, *When God Shows Up: A History of Protestant Youth Ministry in America*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 294.

The coach's response was "why don't we both do that". This statement embodies the crux of the need for the training of urban church-based youth leaders who can facilitate the holistic development of youth and their families.

APPENDIX A

40 YOUTH DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS

40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents

EXTERNAL ASSETS

Asset Type	#	Asset Name	Asset Definition
Support	1	Family support	Family life provides high levels of love and support.
	2	Positive family communication	Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parent(s).
	3	Other adult relationships	Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.
	4	Caring neighborhood	Young person experiences caring neighbors.
	5	Caring school climate	School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
	6	Parent involvement in schooling	Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.
Empowerment	7	Community values youth	Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
	8	Youth as resources	Young person are given useful roles in the community.
	9	Service to others	Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
	10	Safety	Young person feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.
Boundaries and Expectations	11	Family boundaries	Family has clear rules and consequences, and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
	12	School boundaries	School provides clear rules and consequences.
	13	Neighborhood boundaries	Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
	14	Adult role models	Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
	15	Positive peer influence	Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
	16	High expectations	Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.
Constructive Use of Time	17	Creative activities	Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
	18	Youth programs	Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in community organizations.
	19	Religious community	Young person spends one hour or more per week in activities in a religious institution.
	20	Time at home	Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.

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40 YOUTH DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS

40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents

INTERNAL ASSETS

Asset Type	#	Asset Name	Asset Definition
Commitment to Learning	21	Achievement motivation	Young person is motivated to do well in school.
	22	School engagement	Young person is actively engaged in learning.
	23	Homework	Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
	24	Bonding to school	Young person cares about her or his school.
	25	Reading for pleasure	Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.
Positive Values	26	Caring	Young person places high value on helping other people.
	27	Equality and social justice	Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
	28	Integrity	Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
	29	Honesty	Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."
	30	Responsibility	Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
	31	Restraint	Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.
Social Competencies	32	Planning and decision making	Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
	33	Interpersonal competence	Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
	34	Cultural competence	Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
	35	Resistance skills	Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
	36	Peaceful conflict resolution	Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.
Positive Identity	37	Personal power	Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."
	38	Self-esteem	Young person reports having a high self-esteem.
	39	Sense of purpose	Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."
	40	Positive view of personal future	Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

APPENDIX B

DEAN BORGMAN'S TEN STAGES OF YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRY

1. Building a support base:
 - a. Flowing from a faith community
 - b. Mandated by pastor and denominational leadership
 - c. Supported by committee or board of advisors
 - d. Surrounded by a leadership team of volunteers
2. Research:
 - a. Discovering needs and resources for relevant ministry
 - b. Community research and topical research
 - c. Research owned by the whole support base
3. Networking and collaboration:
 - a. Do community research to find other leaders
 - b. Avoid the silo effect of separate churches and organizations doing similar work in separate ways
4. Contact:
 - a. Becoming friends of young people on their turf
 - b. Incarnational ministry or presence
 - c. Hanging out with a purpose
5. Activities and trips:
 - a. Becoming leaders of young people
 - b. Bonding of youth group in this stage
6. Counseling:
 - a. Referral and case management
 - b. Informal counseling or advising on the run
7. Proclaiming the gospel: (holistic gospel and biblical story)
 - a. Flowing out of earning the right to be heard (being there, respecting, listening, responding, being trusted)
 - b. Making the whole story clear (see below)
8. Nurturing young faith:
 - a. Encouraging young disciples towards the church
 - b. The continuing spiritual life of youth must be in a faith community
 - c. Para church connects with the local church
 - d. Biblical discipleship practiced

APPENDIX B

DEAN BORGMAN'S TEN STAGES OF YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRY

9. Leadership development and service:
 - a. Youth serving church and community
10. Development of growing youth program:
 - a. Planning and management of new structures

Source: *When Kumbaya Is Not Enough: A Practical Theology for Youth Ministry*, Dean Borgman. Pages 228-229.

Foundations for Youth Ministry: Theological Engagement with Teen Life and Culture, Dean Borgman, pages 296-298.

APPENDIX C

LOGIC MODEL TEMPLATE

Logic Model _____ Program Director:

Participant description:

Inputs Resources	Activities What participants do in your program	Outputs How much svc?	Initial Outcomes Skills, knowledge, attitudes, values	Intermediate Outcomes Change in behavior	Long-term Outcomes Improved condition, status

APPENDIX D

NATIONAL NETWORK OF YOUTH MINISTRIES COMMUNITIES OF HOPE MODEL



National Network of Youth Ministries. *Communities of Hope Assessment Tool*,
www.YouthWorkers.net, 2010.

APPENDIX E

HOLISTIC URBAN YOUTH MINISTRY FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Participant Information:

In order to participate in this focus group you need to be a part of one of the following categories: (please check all that apply)

- ☐ Parents of youth actively participating in an urban church youth ministry for at least 2 years (current and alumni)
- ☐ Youth leaders who have served in an urban church youth ministry for at least two years
- ☐ The senior pastor
- ☐ Young adults who have participated in an urban church youth ministry for at least 2 years when they were in high school

Background Data:

1. Years in urban youth ministry (circle one)

0-2 years 3-5 years 5-10 years 10-15 years 15+ years

2. Degree of urban youth ministry involvement in a local church setting per week

1-3 hours 4-8 hours 9-12 hours 13-15 hours 15+ hours

3. If this church's youth ministry were truly effective, which statement would describe it? (Pick one or create your own)

- ☐ Helps parents disciple their children
- ☐ Helps youth find the Lord
- ☐ Gives young people a safe place to go
- ☐ Teaches our children about the basics of the Christian faith
- ☐ _____

4. A strong youth ministry will attract unchurched young people (circle one)

Strongly Agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

APPENDIX E

HOLISTIC URBAN YOUTH MINISTRY FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

5. A strong youth ministry will integrate young people into the life of a local church

Strongly Agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

6. The main responsibility of strong youth ministry are the young people who grew up in that congregation

Strongly Agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

7. A strong youth ministry puts a focus on teaching what Christians believe.

Strongly Agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

8. Define holistic urban youth ministry (as you understand this term to mean).

9. Describe your church's process of training urban youth or have you ever received any training to do what you do (teach, lead, volunteer with) the young people in your church? If so, could you describe it?

10. What are some areas where you would appreciate more training (how to teach the Bible, how to build relationships with young people, etc.) have?

Other thoughts?

APPENDIX F

HOLISTIC URBAN YOUTH MINISTRY FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The Church verses the Street:

1. How would you respond to a 14 year old boy who is thinking about joining a gang? His mom, a single parent is concerned about him so she brought him to church to meet with the pastor/youth pastor. His father was violently killed years ago. His environment and peers are involved in gang violence; he has relatives and friends who have killed others yet this hasn't affected him much. How would you answer his mother? What advice would you give him?

Does True Love Really Wait?

2. A 12 year-old girl who is actively involved in the church's youth ministry has friends who are dating and pressuring her to do the same. Most of the dates result in drinking alcohol, using drugs and having sex. She really doesn't want to date but since she is in with the popular girls it is important for her to remain popular. Her friends are reminding her that she must begin to date in order to hang with them. She is graduating from middle school and has never been kissed. Her parents are unaware of her dilemma. Mom attends the church but dad does not. This middle school student has trusted you with this information. How would you handle this situation?

LGBT: Loving Gracefully By Truth

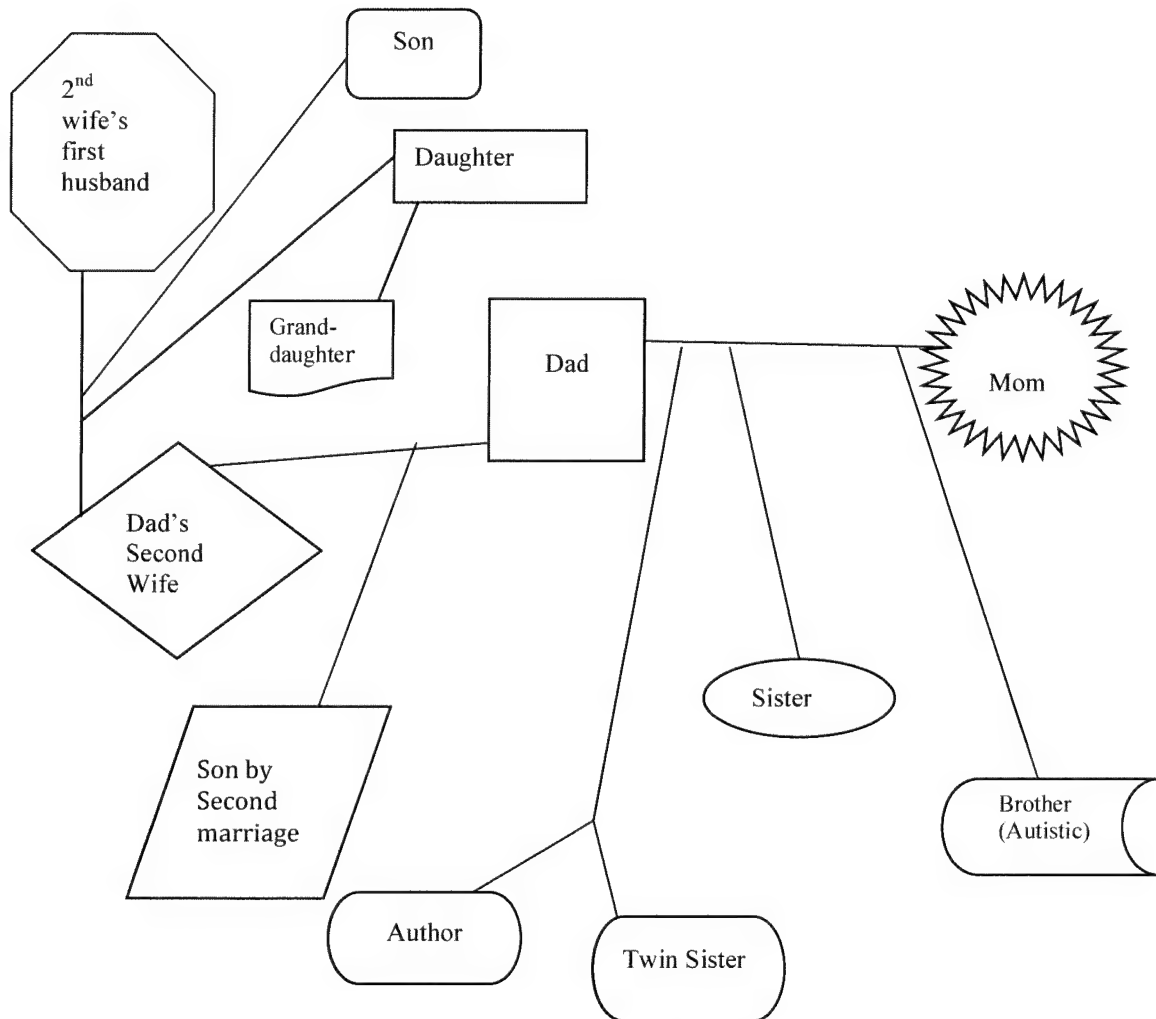
3. A single mom is concerned about her son who is dealing with a sexual identity issue. The semi-absent father is not involved in his life. Her older son is an athlete, the daughter is popular and involved in many activities while her youngest son is struggling with his sexuality. The church has taken a stance on homosexuality with a clear policy on heterosexual relationships leading to marriage between a man and a woman. The youngest son trusts the relationship with his youth leader and has confided in him. His mother is asking for prayer and support. What are your next steps as a pastor for the mother, son and family?

Lost in the House

4. Parents serving on the leadership team of your church come to meet with the youth leader because their daughter no longer wants to attend church or youth group. They express discouragement for forcing her to come against her will and don't want to generate further hostility towards God or the things of God. The parents are Christians but don't practice much of their faith outside of the church building. They are asking the youth leaders for advice. What would you recommend?

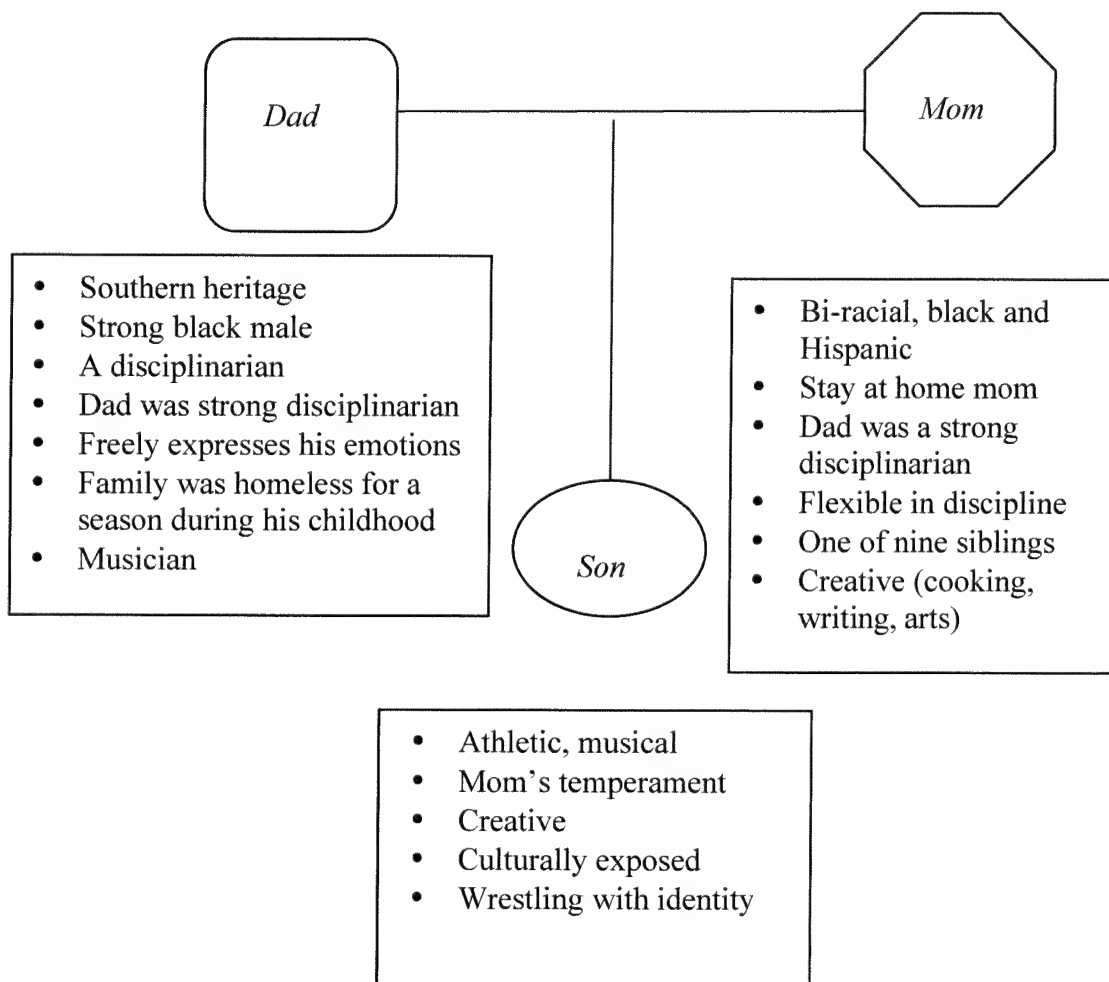
APPENDIX G

VIRGINIA WARD'S FAMILY OF ORIGIN



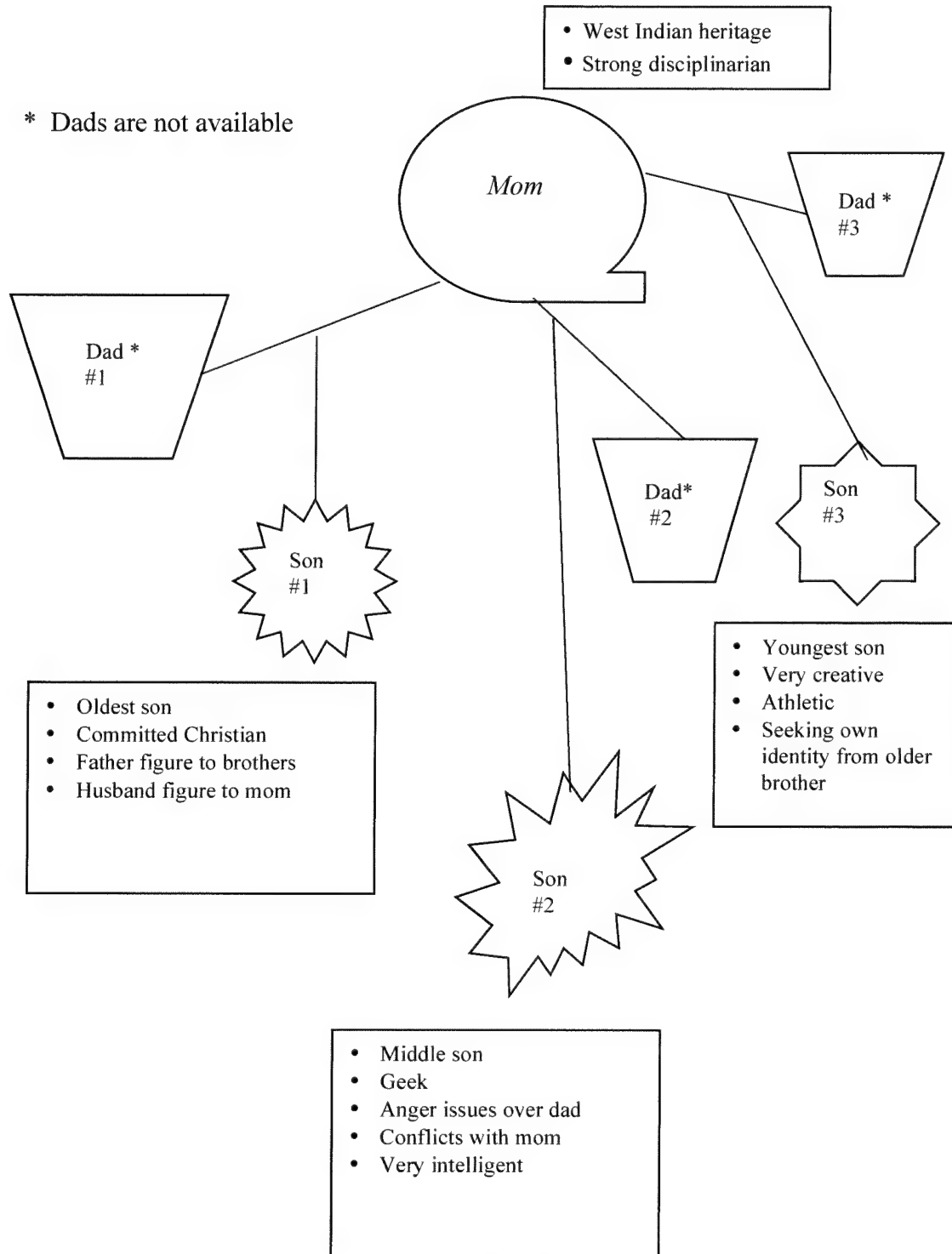
APPENDIX H

FAMILY A - TWO PARENT FAMILY OF ORIGIN



APPENDIX I

FAMILY B - SINGLE PARENT FAMILY OF ORIGIN



APPENDIX J

PRE-FOCUS GROUP DATA

Participant Information (from all focus groups)

Description	# of Responses	% of Sample
Parents	7	18.9%
Youth Leaders	28	75.7%
Senior Pastors	2	5.4%
Total	37	100%

Participant Information (from Cambridge church focus groups)**

Description	# of Responses	% of Sample
Parents	3	20%
Youth Leaders	12	80%
Senior Pastors	0	0%
Total	15	100%

**This sample is reflected in the rest of the responses

Background Data:

1. Years in urban youth ministry:

Description	# of Responses	% of Sample
0-2	1	6.7%
3-5	1	6.7%
5-10	6	40%
10-15	1	6.7%
15+	4	26.6%
N/A	2	13.3%
Total	15	100%

APPENDIX J

PRE-FOCUS GROUP DATA

2. Degree of urban youth ministry involvement in a local church setting per week

Description	# of Responses	% of Sample
1-3	6	40%
4-8	3*	20%
9-12	1	6.7%
13-15	0	0%
15+	2*	13.3%
N/A	3	20%
Total	15	100%

X* = Worked in a faith based setting with urban youth 40+ hour/week for 5 years.
Church settings 4/hours/week since September

3. If this church's youth ministry were truly effective, which statement would describe it? (Select all that apply.)

Description	# of Responses	Comments
Helps parents disciple their children	5	Develop/mature in a well-rounded manner including developing in faith
Helps youth find the Lord	9	Parents continue to see and use the youth ministry as a resource throughout the child's development
Gives young people a safe place to go	6	Creates a wholesome atmosphere where youth are encouraged in every area of their lives (spiritual, physical, etc.)
Teaches our children about the basics of the Christian faith	8	All of the above and gives young people a safe space to discuss their faith, everyday life and any struggles they have/are encountering in those areas.

APPENDIX J

PRE-FOCUS GROUP DATA

4. A strong youth ministry will attract unchurched young people.

Description	# of Responses	% of Sample
Strongly agree	5	33.3%
Agree	9	60%
Don't know	1	6.7%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	15	100%

5. A strong youth ministry will integrate young people into the life of a local church.

Description	# of Responses	% of Sample
Strongly Agree	8	53.3%
Agree	7	46.7%
Don't know	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	15	100%

6. The main responsibility of strong youth ministry is the young people who grew up in that congregation.

Description	# of Responses	% of Sample
Strongly Agree	0	0%
Agree	6	40%
Don't Know	0	0%
Disagree	9	60%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total	15	100%

APPENDIX J

PRE-FOCUS GROUP DATA

7. A strong youth ministry puts a focus on teaching what Christians believe.

Description	# of Responses	% of Sample
Strongly Agree	2	13.3%
Agree	11	73.3%
Don't Know	0	0%
Disagree	1	6.7%
Strongly Disagree	1	6.7%
Total	15	100%

8. Define holistic urban youth ministry (as you understand this term to mean).

Description
A holistic urban youth ministry would focus on all aspects of a child's development. Meaning staying in tuned with not only the spiritual development but also the youth's family, friends and school environments. Engaging all aspects of the youth's life.
Teaching youth about Christian values that address their body, mind and spirit. It's integrating today's technology with biblical principles in a way that is beneficial to the problems/areas of life they consider important to them.
When kids, pre-teens and teens regularly attend a group setting of other young people, in a church atmosphere to talk about God, life and other topics.
Spiritual, emotional, Christian
Contribute to the overall development of youth spiritually, socially, academically/educationally, morally
A ministry, which encompasses, includes, and connects with the total individual (i.e. child/youth). A ministry that considers the participants' spiritual, emotional, physical and financial needs and that of the child/rens parents, parent or guardian.
Holistic urban youth ministry is when the whole person learns about the Lord. When they are rooted and grounded in the word.
A ministry (youth) that have a strong belief in Christ.
I understand holistic urban youth ministry as a group of young men and women (typically junior high and high school age) that meet and discuss the importance of God in their lives. This goes beyond meeting just once a week at church. This means investing personal time into the lives of the youth. Part of this also incudes raising the parents in understanding ways in which to raise their children and ways that God desires the church to connect with family unit.
A ministry where youth run and own it, rather than just church on Sundays.

APPENDIX J

PRE-FOCUS GROUP DATA

8. Define Holistic urban youth ministry (as you understand this term to mean).

Description (continued)
Holistic urban youth ministry is incarnational, intentional, and relational. Incarnational in that everything is infused with Jesus, whether it is teaching, events, or fellowship. Intentional in that youth should be receiving more than just Bible knowledge but Jesus applied to everyday life. Youth leader should know about their family life, school life, and the overall non-church life. Relational in that it takes real relationships to do anything in the lives of youth and these relationships have to be build with the youth and their family.
To me this means a youth ministry, which caters to the modern needs of youth. Using the things, which attract youth daily to transfer the knowledge of God at a level, they could relate For example through media and the arts.
A ministry where the needs of youth are met by introducing and incorporating Christ into every facet of their lives in a wholesome environment.
A service to inner city young people, their friends, and families that helps them understand and apply the Lord, His word and standards into their everyday life.
I would define “holistic urban youth ministry” as a ministry that works w/urban youth in every area of their lives. It is a ministry that seeks honesty and true relationships w/youth beyond their Sunday morning persona. It is a ministry that doesn’t compromise the word but is rooted in love and understanding instead of judgment. It is a ministry that meets young people where they are and grows them into the men and women God has called them to be.

APPENDIX J

PRE-FOCUS GROUP DATA

9. Describe your church's process of training urban youth or have you ever received any training to do what you (teach, lead, volunteer) with the young people in your church? If so, could you describe it?

Description
I have not received direct training as it pertains to youth but in other areas such as leadership and personalities.
ALC youth attend youth group weekly and discuss the principles of the bible which includes open discussions about them understanding God's plan for their lives. They also review material and watch relevant movies.
<p>Example #1: Children's church example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You watch 2. You teach with help 3. You teach on your own <p>Example #2: Youth Group</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grow up in it 2. Learn the way 3. Lead with help 4. Lead on your own
Church does an excellent job of supporting youth and their families on many different levels weekly meetings, special activities, involvement in day to day church function, leadership training
Yes I have received leadership training, mentorship training, spiritual guidance, family leadership training (Joshua's men)
Training consists of appropriate materials, supplies and space. Training includes of group and individual meetings with lead instructors, group meetings with other instructors and church wide meetings, trainings and conferences with Senior Pastor, associate pastor (also the youth leader) outside guest speakers and specialists.
First Rev. Virginia always said that we have to like children in order to work and teach them. I observed the way Rev. Virginia did children's church. I made sure that my lesson was prepared ahead of time. Plus I enjoy working with children.
Youth pastor training is non-existent in the world today. This proves to be the most difficult aspect in youth ministry volunteers. They usually want more of something. I think that passion is important in youth ministry. I have also seen that when youth leaders are in one accord (prayer, scripture readings through the week) the more effective a youth ministry becomes.
<p>Know – the ways of the Lord</p> <p>Walk – in those ways outside of church</p> <p>Teach – those ways of the Lord to other youth</p>

APPENDIX J

PRE-FOCUS GROUP DATA

9. Describe your church's process of training urban youth or have you ever received any training to do what you (teach, lead, volunteer) with the young people in your church? If so, could you describe it?

Description (Continued)
Our church tries to plug our youth into regular Sunday services and on occasion as peer leaders within the youth ministry. I have not received any formal training in this church, more of a shadowing process of the youth pastor (except for one outside training we had from Jesus Focused Youth Ministries). My training has come from internships as well as my degree program in youth ministry.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach • Lead • Yes I have training experiences working along with other leaders • We teach the youth through conversation with content from the Word of God and relate this to what happens in society.
I have not received training per se, but what I have experienced over the years is that every youth has different needs which need to be catered to so I believed that youth leaders should be involved in a counseling/psychology seminar to understand certain behaviors and challenges youth face and how to possibly address them.
I believe teamwork is also essential.
I haven't necessarily gone thru workshops, training, or classes, however I've sat down with others who have. That as well as mentorship from Pastors compiled with knowing youth.
I can't recall receiving any training on working w/the youth here at the church. Our team was established based on the work and relationships people already were doing/had w/youth. There was faith-based trauma training through the Boston Public Health Commission that I attended but we weren't encouraged to attend as youth leaders.

APPENDIX J

PRE-FOCUS GROUP DATA

10. What are some areas where you would appreciate more training (how to teach the Bible, how to build relationships with young people, etc.) have?

Description
An area I would like a little more training is teaching the bible. Being about to back things up with scripture.
How to teach the Bible (three responses)
How to keep youth connected, engaged and actively continuing in their spiritual development/growth. (Staying involved once the participant course is completed.)
How to build relationships with young people.
I believe more bible study with homework and community activities to build more relationships with other youth.
I think that one thing we as a church need more training in is just the word of God and how to effectively teach it to others. I think that each situation is different. Some people know how to teach but can't interact with youth. Training truly needs to come from an understanding of the youth leaders that you have. This can be gained from personality tests, 1 on 1 conversations/get togethers and group discussions.
Outside involvement (planned outings)
Disciple that includes the family. More on how to bring families into the process of discipling their kids and spiritually supporting them.
I would say learning different methods to teach the Bible so there will be versatility, a fresh approach and effectiveness.
How to convey what I know to what they need grace in dealing with what they do.
How to have honest conversations w/young people about what is going on in their lives and respond from a biblical standpoint w/out coming across as judgmental.

Other thoughts?

Description
Relationship Builders Skills, How to get Parents to Volunteer
(Faith) Conclusion – church works best when it is an endeavor that involves and address all members and aspects of family life.
I wonder in our context how might youth ministries be better supported/organized to accommodate the urban lifestyle (busy schedules, demanding youth situations, need for youth leaders overall) in our “black church tradition” as well.
Youth get bored fast, so fresh ideas and approaches are absolutely necessary for today's generation.
It would be nice/helpful to learn more about what other youth ministries are doing and how they're doing it. I think it would be interesting for the youth if we did leader exchanges so that they could interact w/other youth leaders, hear their perspectives, and just see some new faces from time to time.

APPENDIX K

POST FOCUS GROUP DATA

Answers note a change in thinking after the holistic focus group.

3. If this church's youth ministry were truly effective, which statement would describe it? (Check all that apply.)

Description	# of Responses	Comments
Helps parents	3	Builds Christian relationships
Helps youth	5	Helps youth learn and gain valuable life skills that incorporate Christian values
Gives young people	4	I would add building stronger families.
Teaches youth	5	
Total	17	

4. A strong youth ministry will attract unchurched young people.

Description	# of Responses	% of Sample
Strongly agree	3	60%
Agree	2	40%
Don't know	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	5	100%

5. A strong youth ministry will integrate young people into the life of a local church.

Description	# of Responses	% of Sample
Strongly agree	2	50%
Agree	2	50%
Don't know	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	4	100%

APPENDIX K

POST FOCUS GROUP DATA

Answers note a change in thinking after the holistic focus group.

6. The main responsibility of strong youth ministry is the young people who grew up in that congregation.

Description	# of Responses	% of Sample
Strongly agree	1	25%
Agree	1	25%
Don't know	0	0%
Disagree	2	50%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	4	100%

7. A strong youth ministry puts a focus on teaching what Christians believe.

Description	# of Responses	% of Sample
Strongly agree	2	50%
Agree	2	50%
Don't know	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	4	100%

APPENDIX K

POST FOCUS GROUP DATA

Answers note a change in thinking after the holistic focus group.

8. Define Holistic urban youth ministry (as you understand this term to mean).

Description
I still believe it has to tackle all aspects of the youth's life. I do believe now that the holistic approach needs to come from everyone involved with the child including the leaders, parents and other members.
To minister to the whole person, spirit, mind, emotions and body. Using modern techniques to engage youth in learning and understanding Christian values and positive ways to deal with unforeseen urban challenges.
Same
I think "financially" – financial need should be added to the "whole potential" picture. I mean in the sense of referring them and more families if resources are needed i.e. access to food bank, medical access, scholarship, etc.
Working with the whole child to learn about the Lord.
Holistic urban youth ministry caters to the modern needs (physically, emotionally, educationally, spiritually, psychologically) in a way that will relate to their level.
A service for families with youth people to develop them spiritually, emotionally, academically, physically, socially, monetarily along with God' will and statutes.

9. Describe your church's process of training urban youth leaders or have you ever received any training to do what you (teach, lead, volunteer) with the young people in your church? If so, could you describe it?

Description
After the discussion, I'm not sure how the youth leaders are trained. (Two responses)
Observing a class for a while until I felt comfortable teaching and being prepared

APPENDIX K

POST FOCUS GROUP DATA

Answers note a change in thinking after the holistic focus group.

10. What are some areas where you would appreciate more training (how to teach the Bible, how to build relationships with young people, etc.) have?

Description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relationship building between youth and adults - Alcohol/drug use - Sexuality
Same
More counseling around today's issues

Other Thoughts?

Description
Building positive relationships between youth leaders and parents
More open minded kids
What types of training do youth leaders need? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relationship building - How to recommend/identify resources - Societal issues (current)
Skills youth leaders need to have: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to know, understand and recognize when an issue, circumstance, problem needs to be out sourced, kicked up or handed over/passed on to an expert. 2. Parental Involvement 3. Access to resources 4. Access to leadership 5. Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to be evaluated - Their effectiveness needs to be evaluated
Youth leaders should have skills in youth counseling (mental, sexuality, etc., education)
Pre-teen and teen situation experience

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